

Heavy infantry, artillery assault across 4 fronts: Routes to Panjsher cut off: Heavy casualties on both sides

# Taliban unprecedented offensive; Nejrab falls

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban militia Wednesday launched its much anticipated summer offensive aimed at defeating Afghanistan's Northern Alliance and ending the country's protracted civil war.

Taliban authorities, the alliance and independent sources confirmed the offensive began about 4am local time (2400 GMT) with infantry assaults across four front lines which ring the heavily fortified Panjsher Valley.

The assaults were supported by tanks, heavy artillery barrages and aerial bombardments by the militia's fleet of Russian-made MiGs while analysts said the size of the Taliban military machine remains unprecedented.

A Taliban spokesman claimed militia troops — who already control 80 per cent of Afghanistan — had advanced six kilometres from Tagab, a strategic entry into the Panjsher Valley and had captured the district of Nejrab.

'The Islamic militia captured Nejrab and are now attacking Mahmood-i-Raqi,' a Taliban spokesman told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press.

He said 15 tanks and a sizeable quantity of ammunition were seized.

One Taliban commander told AFP the

militia had up to 100,000 men after a massive pre-offensive military build-up designed to knock out the alliance's defences 'once and for all'.

However, western diplomats in Pakistan said 50,000 Taliban troops was a more probable figure.

This was double the highest previous estimate of Taliban strength, put at 25,000 men in 1997 but the opposition has claimed Taliban numbers have been bolstered by Pakistan and Arab mercenaries. Opposition losses were conceded by the alliance as heavy fighting focused in Nejrab throughout Wednesday.

The Old and New Roads are about 25 kilometres north of Kabul, the near-by mountain range of Kohi-i-Safi is to the east, and further east is the district Tagab.

The four points form the southern flank of the Panjsher Valley where opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood stands as the last obstacle to Taliban ambitions of taking total control of the country.

Military analysts attached to foreign embassies in Islamabad, said Masood had between 10,000 and 15,000 hardened troops and can rely on 40,000 men who were willing to defend their home-

land from the ethnic Pashtoon dominated Taliban.

'The Taliban outnumber Masood's forces by 10 to one,' Pakistan-based military analyst Kamal Hyder said.

The alliance — made-up of ethnic Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen — holds ground stretching from the Old road across the Shamali Plains to the Panjsher Valley, north to Tajikistan and east to Pakistan.

'They launched their attack last night in every direction,' alliance spokesman Abdullah said.

'On the New Road they attacked the main highway leading to Bagramair-base. On the Old Road troops are bracing for a second attack to be launched mostly by Arabs and Pakistanis,' he claimed.

Abdullah said aerial bombardments were steadily hitting areas around the frontlines, including civilian areas. Both sides claimed the other had suffered heavy casualties.

Independent sources said foreign aid workers in the Panjsher were cut-off from southern routes while Kabul's eastwards exit through the Khyber Pass had also been blocked.

attempts to find a peace settlement.

**UN suspends flights to Kabul**

The United Nations said Wednesday its flights to Kabul will remain suspended pending reconfirmation of agreed security guarantees by Afghan parties.

The UN has sought a 'clarification' from the Afghan opposition Northern Alliance following the rocketing of Kabul airport on Tuesday, a UN statement here said.

The rockets, which impacted in or around the airport during the agreed window for take-off and landing of humanitarian flights, forced a UN plane and flights of ICRC and PACTEC to turn back, it said.

The statement said the UN agencies were 'extremely' concerned at the disruption of humanitarian activities by the rocketing.

It recalled that all parties to the Afghan conflict during a recent UN-sponsored meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, agreed to respect the impartiality of the UN.

'The UN has suspended its next flights to Kabul pending the reconfirmation of the agreed security guarantees,' the statement said.

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'The Taliban have blocked the road to Jalalabad at Sarobi. The road is cut, it could be impossible to fly out meaning the only way out for foreigners is the treacherous southern route through Kandahar,' one foreign aid worker said.

Kandahar is the Taliban's de-facto capital in the south from where the militia's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has vowed to rid his country of Masood.

In Kabul, residents said at least six rockets struck the capital, launched from hilltops controlled by Masood while artillery shelling on the nearby front was clearly audible to locals.

The offensive came just three days after the United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi left Afghanistan amid failed efforts to strike a peace deal between the warring parties.

Brahimi and the Six-plus-Two group appealed for peace but Brahimi had also asked Afghanistan's neighbour's to stop 'pouring arms and war making material into the country'.

Six-plus-Two groups Afghanistan's neighbours — Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, and Turkmenistan — with the United States and Russia in

NATION

29 JUL 1999

# Taliban forces advance towards Panjsher

## 130 killed in fighting to capture Masood area

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban militia Thursday kept up their offensive against forces of Ahmad Shah Masood to capture the last remaining opposition-held territory amid rocket strikes and pitched front line battles, with reports saying 130 people had been killed.

Five rockets were fired by the opposition forces and struck the capital, residents said.

Combined figures from medical, Taliban, and opposition reports claimed at least 130 people had been killed in battle and by rockets.

The opposition also claimed the recapture of lost ground in the valleys surrounding the strategically important district of Nejrab.

But the district and the main city of Nejrab remained in Taliban hands after they captured late Wednesday catching

the opposition by surprise.

Nejrab is one of seven known entry points into the Panjsher Valley, where anti-Taliban forces have heavily fortified themselves putting up the last obstacle to total the domination of Afghanistan by the Islamic militia.

An opposition spokesman said fighting was heavy on the Old Road and the New Road overnight while battles eased at Koh-i-Safi. Frontlines to the north and central provinces were quiet.

'But fresh fighting erupted early this afternoon (Thursday) at Koh-i-Safi and long the New Road,' he added.

The Old and New Roads are about 25 kilometres north of Kabul, the near-by mountain range of Kohi-i-Safi is to the east, and further east are the twin districts of Nejrab and Tagab.

A Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment on the fighting.

But in an official broadcast supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar urged all Muslims to hold special prayers for the offensive.

'Muslims are encountering numerous hardships,' Omar said on the official Radio Shariat broadcast. He said the enemies of Islam were hatching plots against Muslims who, in many cases, lived 'under tyrannic rules of tyrants.'

The Taliban — which holds 80 percent of Afghanistan — launched the campaign aiming to end the country's protracted civil war by wiping out forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Backed by a fleet of MiG jet fighters, tanks and artillery the militia made a steady advance towards the Panjsher through Nejrab with heavy strikes along the New Road which leads to the alliance's Bagram airbase.

Analysts say the offensive could involve as many as 100,000 men from both sides after the Taliban bolstered its ranks through an intensive 'recruitment drive'. Masood claims this includes foreign mercenaries.

Heavy artillery duels were clearly audible in Kabul where sporadic mushroom clouds of dust dotted the skyline after rocket strikes, targeted at Kabul airport. The United Nations suspended humanitarian flights to the capital.

The opposition spokesman claimed at least 100 Taliban troops were killed in battle since early Wednesday and many more had been injured.

'The offensive will cost both sides dearly, the entire area is very heavily mined,' one western observer said. 'These figures are conservative.'

Masood's spokesman said once the Taliban had been pushed back, his forces discovered 26 dead militiamen on the Old Road, about 30 on the New Road, another 20 at Koh-i-Safi and a further 40 at Nejrab.

Masood's forces had incurred 12 killed and 30 wounded, the spokesman said.

Medical sources here added at least another 200 wounded had been ferried back to hospitals in the capital by Wednesday night while four civilians were injured in this morning's rocket strikes. Radio Shariat reported that two civilians were killed and three injured in Kabul by rocket attacks on Wednesday.

Masood's outpost in the Panjsher is manned mainly by Tajiks and some ethnic Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. His ground stretches from the Old Road to the Panjsher Valley, north to Tajikistan and east to Pakistan.

His commanders once formed part of the Mujahideen factions who fought the 1978-89 occupation by the former Soviet Union. With the help of other ethnic groups they have maintained almost five years of war against the ethnic Pashtoon Taliban.

**'Taliban bombing kills 23 civilians'**

Another report adds from Islamabad: Taliban jets Thursday carried out several bombing runs against opposition strongholds in northern Afghanistan's Parwan province killing at least 23 people, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported. The Taliban aircraft bombed Charikar, Jabul Siraj and Qarabagh towns and also pounded Gulbahar district, located at the mouth of the Panjshir valley stronghold of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, it said. Quoting an unnamed opposition spokesman, the private news service said the 23 killed in the air raids were 'all civilians.'

No independent confirmation of the report was immediately available.

## Taliban release 200 opposition prisoners

PESHAWAR, July 28: The Taliban Supreme Commander, Mulla Mohammad Omar, on Wednesday ordered the release from the militia's captivity of 200 opposition prisoners, reports said.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported that the captives had been freed from Surpoza prison in Kandhar, Taliban's headquarters in southwestern Afghanistan.

Mulla Omar issued a special edict to set free the prisoners who belonged to the opposition Northern Alliance, the agency quoted a Taliban spokesman, Abdul Hayee Mutmain, as saying. The spokesman said the Taliban had caught the soldiers during its battles with the opposition.

According to the AIP, the prisoners' release came amid reports of opposition-Taliban battles in northern Afghanistan, with the militia claiming to have made gains in Kapisa province.—dpa

NATION

30 JUL 1999

DAWN

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An opposition spokesman said fighting was heavy on the Old Road and the New Road overnight while battles eased at Koh-i-Safi. Frontlines to the north and central provinces were quiet. "But fresh fighting erupted early this afternoon (Thursday) at Koh-i-Safi and along the New Road," he added.

The Old and New Roads are about 25 kilometres north of Kabul, the near-by mountain range of Koh-i-Safi is to the east, and further east are the twin districts of Nejrab and Tagab.

A Taliban spokesman was not available for comment on the fighting. But in an official broadcast

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DAWN

30 JUL 1999

# Afghan fighting rages as Taliban open fifth front

NATION

31 JUL 1999

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban has opened another front in its summer offensive against an opposition alliance, opposition sources said Friday, amid reports Osama bin Laden is preparing to leave the country.

Opposition spokesman Abdullah said the Taliban had advanced towards the opposition-held Bagram airbase at two points from the New Road front line, 25 kilometres north of Kabul.

'They have arrived at Barikaw Bridge and also captured hilltops to the west of the New Road. There is fighting on the Old Road but the front lines remain unchanged,' he said.

Other opposition reports said fighting was continuing at the Koh-i-Safi mountain range while the Taliban had also launched a fresh infantry assault from a fifth front line at Ghorband overnight.

Independent sources confirmed the fighting.

The Taliban - which controls 80 percent of Afghanistan - on Wednesday launched its offensive aimed at taking ground controlled by opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood and ending the protracted civil war.

Fighting has focused on four fronts to the south of the Panjsher Valley, where Masood and 14,000 troops have

heavily fortified themselves behind the Old Road, New Road, Koh-i-Safi and the twin districts of Tagab and Nejrab.

'They launched a fresh assault from Ghorband and it was heavy. The Taliban were pushed back and at the moment the fighting has eased to artillery exchanges,' Abdullah said.

He said bombing by the militia's ageing fleet of MiGs had claimed 30 civilian casualties. Fighting had also escalated in Nejrab where the Taliban initially made quick gains.

A Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment.

Military analysts say the offensive could involve up to 100,000 men. Masood has support from another 30,000 men who live in the Panjsher while the Taliban bolstered its ranks through an extensive recruitment drive.

Masood claims this includes foreign mercenaries and one opposition commander has said Pakistani and Arab casualties were being ferried to hospitals in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

An estimate from various reports put the total death toll at about 200 and the injured at more than 400.

The opposition has reported about 100 dead Taliban troops while medical sources said Kabul hospitals had re-

See page

## Afghan fighting

From page

ceived 50 dead and 200 injured. Heavy casualties were reported from hospitals in Jalalabad and the Panjsher.

An independent source said casualties incurred by the Taliban were due mainly to landmines, especially at Tagab and the New Road.

'They have been spending most of the time clearing the landmines which guard the entrances to the Panjsher Valley,' he said.

He added the road between Kabul and the Khyber Pass in Pakistan had been reopened to regular traffic but it could be closed at any time subject to Taliban's discretion.

Journalists have been barred from travelling to the frontlines and have been turned back at check points several kilometers before the actual fighting area.

Kabul residents said the death toll from rocket strikes was at least 14 after at least 12 Taliban fighters were killed Thursday morning when a heavy rocket struck a military command centre.

The fighting coincided with a report by the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press that Osama bin Laden was prepar-

ing to leave the country voluntarily because of the possibility of further US military strikes.

Analysts have said bin Laden's departure would resolve a major problem for the Taliban, who fear another US missile strike on Afghanistan would damage their offensive.

'At the moment the Taliban are battling hard Masood's forces. But another American military strike could ruin their offensive,' one western military analyst said, referring to US strikes on bin Laden's hideout in August last year in retaliation to two African embassy bombings.

Masood's outpost in the Panjsher is manned mainly by ethnic Tajiks and some ethnic Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen. The area he controls stretches from the Old Road to the Panjsher Valley, north to Tajikistan, and east to Pakistan. His commanders once formed part of the mujahideen factions who fought the 1979-89 occupation by the former Soviet Union.

In conjunction with other ethnic groups they have waged almost five years of war against the ethnic Pashtun Taliban.

## Taliban repulse Masood troops

KABUL, July 30: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban pushed back troops loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on a strategic road north of Kabul in a third day of fighting on Friday, sources in the city said.

The Taliban seized the Tota Khan mountains overlooking the Bagram airbase held by Masood on the so-called New Road some 50 km north of Kabul, they said.

Kabul residents reported heavy artillery exchanges overnight and after dawn in two front line areas 25 km north of the capital.

The Taliban's aging ex-Soviet fighter aircraft were heard taking off to attack Masood's defences at the two Kabul fronts, as well as close to his Panjsher valley bastion some 80 km to the northeast.

Masood's key airbase is at Bagram, just outside his Panjsher valley stronghold.

An opposition spokesman, Abdullah, conceded ground had

been lost to the Taliban, but added: "They will face major resistance and fighting once they try to get closer to the villages".

He said Taliban fighters had approached a bridge near Bagram airbase and an intense artillery exchange was going on. No precise casualty tolls were available.

Kabul airport, from which the Taliban launch their bombing raids, has come under three days of rocket attacks, but the sources said it was not hit by any missiles in fighting on Friday morning.

Taliban officials said the opposition had lost the ability to target the airport.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations have cancelled aid flights to Kabul because of daily rocket attacks on Kabul airport.

Opposition sources contacted in neighbouring Pakistan said 30 civilians were killed in the Taliban offensive close to Kabul. No inde-

pendent verification was available.

The human rights group Amnesty International said on Thursday that thousands of civilians were at risk from the fighting.

"Both the Taleban and the anti-Taleban forces have committed gross human rights abuses against Afghan civilians in the past. What guarantees are there that they will spare civilians this time?" it said. Backed by air attacks and artillery, thousands of Taliban advanced under a full moon on Tuesday night to try to extend their 90 per cent grip on the country to total control by crushing Masood, the movement's last real foe.

The campaign sparked Western and UN expressions of concern and calls for an end to the 20-year-old cycle of factional, ethnic bloodshed.

Several thousand Taliban are believed to be involved in the operation with many more recruits being kept in a reserve force in the battered capital.—Reuters

DAWN 31 JUL 1993

# Osama in safe haven in Afghanistan

Once the international business tycoon and now turned into an Islamist fighter Osama bin Laden is in safe haven in Afghanistan. He has become a golden hen for Western and American Press. Give any story about this anti-US Arab in American Press and earn no less than 50,000 dollars. Five million US dollar award to produce him dead or alive has added his value.

Forty-one year old Saudi millionaire Osama is definitely in Afghanistan but his whereabouts inside this country have been made mystery. He is under tight security in mountainous places which he changes from time to time. Bombing is not possible on him. Cruise missiles do not work. Any access to him is impossible. All efforts to persuade Mulla Omar government to hand Osama over to Washington or at least expel him from Afghanistan have failed.

His exit from Afghanistan is impossible. The entire Taliban government is behind him. One should no longer expect Mulla Omar will withdraw from more US pressure is exerted on Mulla Omar the more Osama is safe inside Afghanistan. Some say Osama security is in the hands of some Pakistani Mujahideen from the Punjab. Others say Afghans and Arab are also together with this special security arrangement. Mulla Omar says he is unaware about Osama.

"We neither asked Osama to leave Afghanistan nor advised him to stay in Afghanistan," once Afghan Islamic Press reported quoting Mulla Omar. But independent circles say Taliban are in full knowledge of whereabouts of Osama. "If they don't know they have no right to rule Afghanistan", a Peshawar based Arab said.

Taliban government was particularly conscious of Osama safety after US cruise missile attack on his base on August 19, 1998 in Afghanistan. This made Mulla Omar to adopt rigid attitude towards Osama safety. There were two reasons for him. Firstly Osama is a Muslim. He has taken shelter in an Islamic country against the Jews and Christians dominated USA. Under Is-

lamic order Mulla Omar is bound to provide him shelter against anti-Islam forces. That is what Islamists think. Secondly Afghan traditions do not allow exit of any guest by force. If Mulla Omar refuses further shelter he is condemned by Islamists inside Afghanistan and loses their backing.

If he negates Afghan traditions and expels Osama then Mulla Omar will be widely condemned by Afghans. So at the moment Mulla Omar is not in a position to afford any opposition from the religious class and diehard Afghans.

Taliban are not convinced by US contention that Osama should be handed over to Americans for the crime what Taliban government believe is still to be proved. Taliban say they have sent Osama's case to the Supreme Court of Afghanistan. "We are ready to start trial of Osama in Afghanistan. Produce evidence of his crime. Court will decide" a Taliban source said.

"But no evidence of Osama was produced in Afghan Supreme Court", these sources added. Taliban think Osama is not criminal after US failure to produce any evidence. US insistence on trial of Osama by Americans and that too in US has evoked sharp reaction inside Afghanistan. US says either it should be an American court or that of Europe for trial of Osama.

"Is it not American goondaism or policing," a Peshawar based Arab said. Osama has been named as criminal in bomb explosions in US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on the reports of American intelligence agencies. To what extent these agencies are reliable the Americans themselves have doubt on them. It has also come to the light that there are some figures who manoeuvre such involvements for their own motives in US.

"US has no contact with Osama. Washington is entirely depending on intelligence reports," an Afghan said. Taliban seem to be not in a mood to back out from Osama.

"When we were in trouble against

Russia, Osama helped Afghans," Afghan sources said.

"Now Osama is in trouble Afghans are for his help", these sources added. There is no country for Osama better than Afghanistan. His exit to any other country is not wise for Osama. He can be trapped even if he comes to Pakistan what to say of Arab or other countries.

There is hardly any scope of negotiation with Mulla Omar on the question of Osama. Taliban government is not acceptable to America and the West. Taliban government attitude towards women, their education and narrow mindedness is pinpointed and bitterly criticised by the West and America. Afghan and Pakistani educated class do not like Mullahs government both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

They think Mulla is reversing Afghanism 400 years back. Many feel Osama has become a problem for Afghanistan. "Osama better leave Afghanistan," one pro-

## Letter From Peshawar

Ilaliz Surullah

Western Afghan said, adding "Let Afghan live. Let some assistance come for rehabilitation of Afghanistan."

But latest US sanctions on Afghanistan for harbouring Osama have little irritated Afghanistan where US monetary role has already ended after withdrawal of Soviet forces.

Western Press and American Press have played up frequent movement of Osama from one place to another in Afghanistan. Osama presence was first mentioned by the Western Press in Nemroz, bordering Iran. Reports said Osama was seen in this Afghan bordering Area. Then it was reported Osama has quietly slipped into Iran. Then it was said he is in Helmand province. It was followed by another report which said Osama is in Baghlan and living with Hekmatyar forces. Of late London newspaper *The Observer* reported that Osama is in Jalalabad. To a great surprise Indian government claimed Osama is in Kashmir and participating in the fight of what Delhi calls Pakistani intruders. The hide-out which has been mentioned by the Paper is Farm Hadda,

four kilometres South of Jalalabad. A Peshawar based senior Afghan journalist dashed to Farm Hadda to know whereabouts of Osama.

"Osama is not in Jalalabad," he said. What is logic in coming to Jalalabad which is vulnerable to any American agent. Or is London report a disinformation attempt of American intelligence agencies to provide another chance to US to strike Jalalabad on the pretext of Osama. Many Afghans also think on these lines. An Arab said Osama will be crazy if he thinks of staying in Jalalabad. "He can be easily trapped if he is near to Pakistan," he believes.

Osama's exodus to Iraq was also reported some time back. It is still being apprehended that Osama can leave for Iraq anytime. Iraq is second safe haven for Osama. But the conflict of Islamic ideology with that of socialist ideology might hinder. Osama is fighting against enemy of Islam. He finds no such thing in Iraq, an Arab says. Afghans have questioned latest US enmity with Osama.

Osama was not so hated by US while he was fighting in Afghanistan against Russia. Osama was present in Afghanistan even during the tenure of Professor Rabbani.

Once Taliban government announced that Osama has been made to confine his activities to his residence and his telephonic and wireless links have been disconnected. That was just to give the impression to the world that Osama is no more active. But independent Afghan sources say it was an attempt to save Osama from outside interception of wireless and telephonic conversation and messages.

Osama has been painted as Mujahid and hero of Islam after the US cruise missile strike on his base in Afghanistan. His role is being angled as Islam versus US. Thanks to Washington blunder. What is harm in opening a window if not all the doors for negotiation with Taliban on the question of Osama.

US pressure on Afghanistan of Mulla Omar will continue to be increased with the passage of time so long as Osama is there.

# Real issue in Afghanistan now is economic

NATION

18 JUL 1999

From Hafiz Sanaullah

Seven Afghans who had emerged as heroes in Afghan war against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 80s have faded from Afghan political scene. They are scattered here and there on both sides of Durand Line. Some are in Pakistan. Others are in Afghanistan. One is in Iran. Mostly they are after shelter. If at all one or two are active they are merely struggling for their survival. If they are named as former G7 of Afghanistan it will not be incorrect.

Gulbadin Hikmatyar (Hizb-e-Islami), Maulvi Yunus Khalis (Hizb-e-Islami), Burhanuddin Rabbani (Jami'at-e-Islami), Maulvi Nabi Muhammadi (Harakate Inqilab-e-Islami), Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani (Mahaz-e-Milli), Sibghatullah Mujaddadi (Jabha-e-Nitaj-e-Milli) and Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf (Ittehad-e-Islami) have gone behind the scene.

They are now target of strong criticism of Afghans particularly Afghan refugees encamped in the muddled houses in NWFP for the last 19 years.

Seven Afghan leaders were very ordinary before Soviet troops stepped in Afghanistan. Hikmatyar was a student leader. He ran away from Afghanistan during Daud's period. He was used by late Prime Minister Bhutto against the then Afghan government.

Khalis was Mulla of a mosque so were Mujaddadi, Muhammadi and Sayyaf. Gilani was Pir (spiritual elder) and Rabbani was theology teacher. US backed Afghan war made them billionaire. Tremors were felt in White House once anyone of them had stepped in US. Maulvi Khalis was made so bold that once he invited US President Bush to embrace Islam. It happened so in a face to face meeting in US.

Afghans thought after Soviet withdrawal these leaders will play the same heroic role in rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Mujaddadi was the first president of Afghanistan. But Hikmatyar did not accept him. Hikmatyar took guns against Mujaddadi government. It was the beginning of no end of infightings of seven parties in Afghanistan. When Hikmatyar was Prime Minister he faced militant opposition from Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood. While Rabbani was President Hikmatyar was hurdle for him. In post-Soviet withdrawal Kabul again became the battle field. Rabbani, Hikmatyar, Mujaddadi and Sayyaf remained engaged in armed clashes and fightings against one an-

other to grab power in Afghanistan. Khalis, Muhammadi and Gilani were not so interested in power through battle.

Ahmad Shah Masood who was in Jami'at-e-Islami but had formed his own group namely Shoorae Nazar was aspiring for occupation of whole of Afghanistan despite his confinement to Panjsher Valley.

Seven leaders failed to rehabilitate Afghanistan. Rather they added fuel to the fire in Afghanistan after Soviet exodus. US did not help in rehabilitation process Washington discredited seven party leaders and dubbed them as Islamic fundamentalists immediately after the war was over. It stunned both Afghans and Pakistanis.

Afghans are annoyed with these leaders. They blame them for what they

He is shuttling between Badakhshan, Uzbekistan and Iran. He is searching for help even if it comes from India, Soviet Union or any anti-Jihad country. Ahmad Shah Masood has provided him shelter.

Muhammadi is in Pakistan. He lives in Cherat, near Pabbi in Peshawar. He is in 70's. He is ill and weak.

Gilani is in 70's. He is in Peshawar. He frequently visits Western countries.

Mujaddadi in 70's also in Peshawar. Of late he was seen active on Afghan refugees stay problem in cities. Sayyaf now in 50's is in Afghanistan as an ally of Ahmad Shah Masood. His men are fighting on front line along with Masood's men in north against Taliban. Seven party leaders have almost dismantled their offices, military bases and communication network in Pakistan. They have done so since their funding is abandoned from US, western countries and

Arab States.

No doubt seven leaders' role against Russians in Afghan war will always be in the memory of Afghans their post-Afghan war role in turning victory into defeat will equally be unforgettable.

Seven party rule in post war period in Afghanistan ended with bloodshed, infightings and armed clashes. The areas they dominated was occupied by their commanders. There was jungle law till Taliban took over.

Mujaddadi and Gilani believed in western type efforts for power. Rabbani and Sayyaf thought in terms of militant way. Hikmatyar was for elections. Their military comeback is not possible. Their future is dim so long as Taliban government is in Afghanistan. If some political process starts some of them might see the light. But they will hardly be warmly welcomed by Afghans.

Some Afghans say there is only chance of one man rule or one party rule in Afghanistan. They say Afghanistan is tremendously fertile for dictatorship.

However in future new set-up is expected to emerge. Taliban phase seems to be temporary though they have maintained law and order, protected life, honour and property of Afghanistan.

The replacement of Taliban will be successful only if it works for economic needs of Afghans side by side retaining slogan of Islam. And that too if it is backed by US, western world, Arab states and Islamic countries. Now Islam is not the issue in Afghan. The issue in a real sense is that of economic.

## Letter from Peshawar

describe as their miserable condition in camps.

"We were brought to Pakistan in camps by these leaders in the name of Islam. They should have arranged our safe return to Afghanistan after they formed their Islamic government in Afghanistan", an Afghan refugee said.

"They kept themselves engaged in armed clashes and infightings to grab power in Afghanistan", he added.

Afghans think Russians destroyed Afghanistan but these seven Afghan leaders too played negative role in further destruction of Afghanistan.

"They let Afghans down in the world", an old Afghan follower of one of seven leaders said in Peshawar.

"They were penniless. They minted money in Afghan war", another Afghan said, adding "Had they maintained unity the Afghan refugees would have returned by now to a rehabilitated Afghanistan".

Seven leaders have now disappeared from international scene. They are devalued. Hikmatyar who is 50 plus is in Tehran. He is *persona non grata* in Pakistan. Hikmatyar is unhappy in Iran. He does not want fighting against Taliban. He does not want Iran should use him against Taliban.

At the moment he has no way out. He seems to be finding out way for Kashmir. He knows how to utilise Jihad and earn name among Muslims. Kashmir is the only way out for him but Pakistan will not allow him.

Khalis is in 80's. He lives 5 km South of Jalalabad City. He is physically so weak that he walks with the help of sticks. He can't say prayer while standing. Rabbani in 60's is in Afghanistan.

## New hope for Afghan peace?

TALKS aimed at averting a new flare-up between Afghanistan's Taliban and the Northern Alliance ended in Tashkent on Tuesday without making much headway. However, under prodding from the Six-plus-Two group that includes countries bordering Afghanistan in addition to America and Russia, the warring sides did agree to hold bilateral talks for a ceasefire and to find a peaceful settlement of their conflict. This augurs well for eventual peace and normalization in a country which has been plagued by a long drawn-out civil war.

Earlier in March this year, the Taliban and the Northern Alliance had reached an agreement on power-sharing and prisoners' release in Ashkhabad. Unfortunately, that accord did not hold and fighting erupted soon after the parleys. That the Taliban and the Northern Alliance have agreed to try to sort out their differences within a few months of the failed Ashkhabad accord is encouraging. One can view in this a softening in the stance of the Taliban who control nearly 90 per cent of the country. This change in perception may have to do with Afghanistan's position of isolation in the wider world.

The Taliban government is recognized by only three countries and is looked down upon worldwide for its obscurantism, and for its harsh treatment of women and for other human rights abuses. For these reasons, the flow of western aid has virtually dried up. International organizations seeking to help rebuild the lives

of the people in the war-ravaged country have also been discouraged to stay aloof. As a result, the country is in desperate straits in terms of its basic food, health and infrastructural needs.

Given this bleak scenario, the Taliban would do well to scrupulously adhere to the Ashkhabad agreement in order to reach a peace settlement with its principal adversary and thus create conditions for a power-sharing arrangement in Kabul representing all major tribal, ethnic and linguistic communities of Afghanistan. A broad-based government would also relieve the worries of Afghanistan's neighbours, whose vested interests have required them to wage a proxy war in the country by siding with various warring factions.

Also, a truly representative Afghan government, adhering to norms of democratic governance and respect for basic human rights and values, would expedite the process of return of Afghan refugees who had fled in millions to neighbouring countries and are still maintaining a wretched existence in these countries. This, in turn, would relieve these countries of considerable economic and political pressure and would lessen the dangers of regional instability caused by the spill-overs of Afghan crisis. It is in the interest of Afghanistan's neighbours, then, to keep pushing the Taliban and the Northern Alliance towards the negotiating table, prodding both to work out the basis for a peace settlement and a broad-based government for the war-ravaged country.

# Taliban flexing muscles to crush Northern alliance

Taliban leaders are now putting their heads together to ponder over the question of recognition of their government in Afghanistan. They have control over 90 per cent area. But they are not being recognised.

After having consolidated in the captured areas Taliban are now heading towards the remaining 10 per cent areas. If they succeed in the near future they will be in a position to claim whole of Afghanistan. But the question is whether they will be recognised by US even if they capture the remaining 10 per cent area which is under the control of the weak opposition including Ahmad Shah Masood. This is serious situation which is focal point of irritation for Taliban.

No doubt Taliban are strong in the Afghan society. They dominate their day to day life. They are capable enough to continue their domination unless some foreign power interrupts them and disturbs their inner present structure.

At the same time Taliban are facing two major problems. Firstly the opposition from Northern Afghanistan. Secondly opposition from US. Mulla Omar, the Afghan Amirul Momineen (Islamic name of head of the govt.) seems to be focussing on these two points. While he is warming up for crushing the opposition from north, Mullah Omar has opened the doors for more and more

talks of Taliban with anti-Taliban countries. In fact he wants to explain Kabul viewpoint which Taliban believe is to be understood in US and the West as yet.

Taliban have problem of communication. They are tightlipped with foreign media in projecting their own viewpoint. They have no influential media of their own. They have no media specialists. Their diplomatic channel is ignorant of professional diplomacy. Mulla Omar is not accessible even to his ministers.

"His ministers wait for days and days but they can't meet Mulla Omar," an Afghan said.

On external side Taliban are in low key. They need initiative and much improvement to win over the world particularly US and the West. On internal front they are facing opposition from the north. Taliban think only battle can decide. Northern Afghan opposition was strong and resisted Taliban so long as some old Afghan generals like General Dostum and General Malik were there. But last August the Opposition lost much. General Dostum and General Malik vanished from the scene. In last September Iranian-backed Shia faction of Hizbe Wahdat faded with Abdur Karim Khalil.

In north the areas in the hands of General Dostum and General Malik included Faryab, Jozjan, Balkh and Baghlan,

Hizbe Wahdat had Bamyan. All these areas were captured by Taliban.

Thus opposition lost its areas and its strength as well. They are now confined to ten per cent area of northern Afghanistan. Their political structure is almost no more left.

Now Taliban face opposition of Ahmad Shah Masood of Punjsher Valley and Professor Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf who has now joined the former. Whatever opposition is doing is mainly due to these two leaders. The reason is that they enjoy both political and

## Letter from Peshawar

Halif Samanullah

military support from outside. Military support is channelled through Iran, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Iran's military support is only for Shia group. Masood has been provided oil supply line by Tajikistan via Amu river.

Taliban say they rule over 90 per cent of Afghanistan but the UN, US and Western officials recognise opposition. Taliban claim they have restored law and order, protected life, honour and property of Afghans. They have done what their predecessors failed to do.

Before Taliban stepped in, Kabul city was divided by Afghan commanders who ruled their particular areas. No

Commander could interfere in each other areas in Kabul city.

"We occupied and we united Afghans under one government," a spokesman of Taliban said. "Our Islamic punishments have eliminated crimes like murder, dacoity, theft and rape," the spokesman added.

Taliban are showing muscles to opposition and there are chances of fighting between the opposition and Taliban forces in the days ahead in the north. Mulla Muttaqi, the Taliban government Information Minister, has never given the reply in "yes" if asked whether fighting should end between them.

An Afghan analyst predicts fighting between Taliban and opposition as Taliban are determined to control whole of Afghanistan. "Hence they will go to any extent," the analyst says.

Much concern has been shown at global level. Efforts are stepped up to bring Taliban and opposition to sit together in a bid to restore peace in Afghanistan.

Of late six plus group organised a meeting between Taliban and opposition in Tashkent to end Afghan's long-running civil war. This group includes Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China and Plus US and Russia. The three hour of talks in the Uzbek capital, produced nothing except that Russia, successor of the Soviet Union which was solely responsible for de-

struction of Afghanistan. was made to sit with its victims.

It brought Central Asia in the range of Afghanistan paving the way for US to penetrate there. While Afghan talks were useful for both US and Russia, these were little fruitful for warring Afghans. Whenever there is no decision in talks the Afghans usually say they will pass on the proposition to their leadership. That is what happened in Tashkent. Opposition demands ceasefire, prisoners swap, joint judiciary and broad based government in Afghanistan. Broad based government means inclusion of all factions including communist. Though exchange of POWs is in the interest of Taliban other demands do not serve their interest. At present 1000 POWs each are held by both sides.

Tashkent talks provided Taliban the opportunity to meet and discuss with officials of US and other countries, join six plus two group and meet the opposition.

It was good contact between Taliban and Washington. It may cool down the boiling water. However, Osama issue which has become complicated remains as it is. Taliban as government was not accepted. Political authority remained with the opposition at global level.

It seems Taliban are on march towards conquering the remaining 10 per cent areas to claim whole of Afghanistan.

DAWN

25 JUL 1999

DAWN 26 JUL 1999

# Smuggling from Afghanistan causes huge losses

By Intikhab Amir

IN LINE with the previous financial years, Pakistan continued to suffer financial losses of billions of rupee in 1998-99 as a result of unabated smuggling of foreign goods from Afghanistan under the covers of Afghan Transit Trade.

According to official estimates Pakistan suffered at least Rs5 billion in customs duty and sales tax losses in 1998-99 as a result of exemptions available to importers under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA).

The smuggled items' haul-up made by the Peshawar Customs and Central Excise Collectorate during the first 11 months of the 1998-99 also substantiates the fact that the curse of smuggling is fast damaging the local trade, business and industry.

In the July-May period of 1998-99 financial year, only the customs authorities seized foreign goods of the customs and freight value of Rs1579.14 million from the NWFP.

This is no more a secret that majority of the items imported under ATTA find their way back to Pakistani markets through traditional smuggling routes on the long Pakistan-Afghanistan borders.

In spite of several attempts to minimize the misuse of ATTA by Afghan and Pakistani importers the government of Pakistan could not get the desired results owing to the increasing level of corruption in the concerned official agencies.

Although the GoP excluded over 35 items from ATTA list a couple of years ago, still a number of such items are being imported under ATTA for Afghanistan which have

no demand in the war torn country.

According to an source, in the 1997-98 the largest quantity of all the items imported under the ATTA for Afghanistan was of razors ignoring the fact that the commodity has little demand in that country especially after Taliban took over the government.

There are several other items which are least consumed in Afghanistan but are still imported in large numbers because of their high demand in Pakistan.

forcefully put an end to smuggling has institutionalized illegal business in the shape of Hayatabad's markets where most of the nationalized banks have also opened branches to offer facilities to those who are involved in the illegal trade. The unabated smuggling of foreign goods has caused irreparable damage to the local industries.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had announced to get the bara markets across the country closed down, however, not much has been done

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The absences of political will on the part of the successive governments, including the sitting one, to put an end to smuggling has institutionalized this illegal business

.....

Peshawar's Hayatabad Karkhano (industrial) markets, adjacent to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and housing thousands of shops full of foreign goods, are known for the large variety of foreign items they offer at rates much less than the prices charged for such goods in any other part of the country.

The availability of smuggled foreign goods in such a large number in the Hayatabad's markets (which is also the main supply line of other Bara markets) raises the question of the ability and utility of our border security forces as well as the civil (political) administrations of FATA as both have failed to check the smuggling manace.

The absences of political will on the part of the successive governments, including the sitting one, to

in this regard.

Being the main source of feeding smuggled foreign items to Bara markets elsewhere each truck loaded with foreign good which is dispatched from the Hayatabad markets reaches its destination after giving 'Bhatta' to the personnel of several agencies manning the check posts every where in the country.

According to a conservative official estimates, the Hayatabad's foreign goods markets annually generate business activities to the tune of around \$1 billion.

It may not be easy to put an end to an economic activity of such a scale, but the business and people involved in it should be brought under the cover of some specially designed taxation structure so that the losses it is causing to the national exchequer could be recovered to some extent.

# The Taliban reality

In the entire history of Afghanistan it has never been ruled by any 'broad-based' government, writes DR EHTASHAM ANWAR MAHAR

**"Y**ou can coax an Afghan into hell but cannot force him into heaven", is a famous Afghan saying which aptly describes the character of Afghan nation. It is well-known that the Afghans have never been subdued by a foreign nation. Recent example of this has been the Soviet adventure in 1979 which soon turned into a misadventure. The arms and funds which flew freely into Afghanistan from the capitalist West via Pakistan, besides making life difficult for the Soviets in Afghan battlefield, found their way into personal coffers of Afghan warlords.

After the departure of the Russians, these warlords turned their motherland into a chessboard, created their own fiefdoms, exacted illegal taxes from inhabitants of their respective areas of influence and fought wars among themselves to acquire more and more land and thus power, money and prestige. Ordinary Afghans who had waged a long and arduous struggle against the Russians in the hope of peace and happiness found themselves in even more misery. Their life, honour and property were not only in constant jeopardy but also frequently encroached upon.

When there was no end in sight, the world witnessed a phenomenal rise of a strange phenomenon—the Taliban. This student militia not only promised but also provided much needed peace and security to their exhausted nation. Ordinary Afghans who had become fed up with the lusty warlords readily accepted Taliban overlordship. Taliban swiftly occupied almost 90 per cent of the total area of the Afghanistan without much use of force. They broke the power of local warlords, cleared illegal checkpoints, made the roads, cities and countryside safer and above all started the process of nation building. Unfortunately there was one aspect of the Taliban which was extremely distaste-

ful for the West. They pledged to make their country an Islamic state by enforcing Shariah in it. This didn't fit in the future designs of the West which is working slowly but surely for the limitation of Islam from the Muslim countries in which they perceive a danger to their own civilisation and culture. As per western philosophers, the clash of civilisations is already underway. The West couldn't thus afford the rise of a fundamentalist state in such a strategically important area of Central Asia where the establishment of one Islamic state may lead to a chain reaction in the neighbouring Muslim states, especially those which have recently won their independence from the erstwhile Soviet Union.

These newly independent Central Asian States have highly developed human and natural resources and a zeal for Muslim brotherhood. The formation of a unified Islamic bloc here was bound to be detrimental to the interests of the West. The attention of West has thus focused on preventing the establishment of an Islamic state in Afghanistan which would definitely have spillover effect on the neighbouring states.

The perpetuation of conflict in Afghanistan serves western interests. The West has denied recognition to the Taliban and has taken the readymade shield of human rights violations to justify its stance. Unfortunately these violations were invisible to the West

when the Afghan warlords, in the pre-Taliban era, were damaging life, honour and property of their hapless countrymen.

Anyhow these human rights concerns are praiseworthy and should be pursued with full vigour but denying recognition on such basis is not likely to work as it is premised on defective understanding of the character of this warlike nation. Afghans are more amenable to the language of carrot than that of stick. On their part, the Taliban should realise that since they cannot subsist without foreign aid and assistance, they have to take into account the concerns of international community regarding the human rights violations, gender discrimination and meddling in the affairs of neighbouring countries. Taliban have already extended their full assurance about:

- their determination to form a broad-based government at Kabul, including all ethnic groups, as soon as possible.
- their desire to work together in complete harmony with other ethnic groups for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of their war-ravaged motherland.
- their strict adherence to the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring countries.
- their pledge to 'purify' their country alone with no intention to spread their religious ideas outside Afghanistan.
- their honouring of all international

commitments made by previous regimes of Afghanistan.

The Western approach towards the Taliban should be based on reciprocity and the fair principle of give and take. The six-plus-two group should take first step in this direction. Whatever one may feel about the Taliban the cutting off all aid in the hope that they will concede defeat is a defective approach. Help should be given because its denial hurts the lower strata of society. The most practical way to deal with them is to engage them. Moreover, it is only by continuous interaction with close societies that the outside world can exercise moderating influence on them.

The Taliban may be inflexible and rigid today, but this is rectifiable over time. Once the Taliban overcome their opponents in the Northern Afghanistan and are faced with the uphill task of national reconstruction and rehabilitation, they would themselves be compelled to take steps to keep their populace contented. Experience, responsibility, need of popular support, urgently required foreign assistance and power's corrupting influence are some of the factors which will tone down their extremist and rigid policies.

The clamour for the establishment of a broad-based government at Kabul should be given up. The opposition which the Taliban are being asked to talk to has either fled the country or, with the exception of Ahmad Shah

Masood, has already met a fatal blow in the battlefield. Urging the Taliban to enter into negotiations with such an opposition without spelling out in advance the principle of power sharing between them is, to say the least, unrealistic. In any case, no power sharing formula is likely to succeed.

There are simply too much suspicion, hatred and conflicting interests compounded by ethnic and tribal rivalries for such an agreement to prove successful. The Taliban have consciously tried to induct as many non-Pakhtuns as possible in their top leadership. A good percentage of higher governmental posts such as governors, ministers, departmental heads and military commanders has been assigned to groups other than the Pakhtuns. Governorships of those provinces in which Pakhtuns are in minority especially went to those belonging to majority factions.

To keep the record straight, it must also be noted here that in the entire history of Afghanistan, it has never been ruled by any 'broad-based' government. The Pakhtuns, who form the bulk of the population, have always been the traditional rulers of this country.

The Taliban are the only force which can deliver what the Afghan need the most—peace and security. Considering the exemplary peace and security which they have brought with them to the once lawless state, all their weaknesses and shortcomings can be ignored. Majority of the Afghans are willing to bear with their ultra-fundamentalist policies because they remain, for the time being, the best hope for their physically devastated and economically shattered land. If permanent peace is to be secured in Afghanistan, whether we like it or not, the Taliban reality can neither be wished away nor wiped out.

NATION 03 JUL 1999

## UN urged to take notice of situation in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** – The All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Unions has demanded of the United Nations and other global forums to take an early notice of the situation in Afghanistan, where employment and livelihood sources are scarce for the war-affected people, and fulfil its responsibility in this connection.

The demand was made by the AAFU on the occasion of its second annual general body meeting held at Ata Labour Hall Peshawar on Friday. On this occasion Saida Gul was elected President and Asadullah Majboor as General Secretary of the Federation. The delegates have also elected 20 members to the Executive Council, besides establishing the Youth and Women Wings of the Federation.

The day-long convention of the All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Unions was attended by leaders and stalwarts of 19 different labour unions and associations. Besides the Afghan labourers, the conference was attended by representatives of the International Labour Federation and office-bearers of various trade unions from the host, Pakistan. Prominent among them were

Haji Abdul Latif, Gul Rehman, Malik Haseeb, Zahoor Awan, Jehanzeb Khan and others.

A large number of trade unionists delivered speeches highlighting their common problems. Besides highlighting their common problems, the labour leaders also drew the attention towards the increasing unemployment. The trade unionists from Pakistan said that due to unrealistic policies of the government the industries are being closed while the Afghan trade unionists said that no one is willing to reopen industries due to uncertain situation of Afghanistan and in return the labourers are becoming jobless. They also supported each others' point of views that labourers from all over this region are facing similar problems, therefore, they need to join hands.

Through a resolution, the conference urged UNO, ILO and other global organisations to speed up efforts for return of peace in Afghanistan which is possible only through a negotiated solution to the conflict. It reminded that thousands of Afghans were facing shortage of food problem.

It suggested the UN, ILO and other global organisations to help resolve the conflict as soon as possible.

NATION 05 JUL 1999

## Osama has new base in Afghanistan

**LONDON (AFP)** - Suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden has moved to the hills of eastern Afghanistan from where he continues to operate his international network, Britain's *Observer* weekly reported Sunday.

It said he was living in a former Soviet collective farm in the village of Farmihadda, south of Jalalabad, which he bought from the Taliban militia last October.

He moved in two months ago, is reportedly protected by his own security and Taliban fighters, and was seen in Jalalabad as recently as Tuesday.

The *Observer* cites local landowners, aid workers, a military commander and security service informants and western security sources for its story.

Bin Laden, a Saudi multi-millionaire, is charged by the United States with masterminding the near-simultaneous bombings of US embassies in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the Kenyan capital Nairobi on August 7, 1998. The attacks killed 224 people and left thousands injured.

According to the *Observer*, bin Laden has survived two recent assassination attempts, while intelligence sources in Islamabad said a third was discovered six weeks ago and all those involved were killed.

## Rain saves Afghanistan forest from fire

**KABUL, July 6:** Steady rain finally extinguished a big forest fire in the eastern Afghan province of Konar after the Taliban's plea for international aid remained unanswered, Radio Shariat said on Tuesday.

"Thankfully, heavy and steady rain completely extinguished the big forest fire in Pech valley of Konar after it destroyed 30 square kilometres of jungle and 130,000 logs," the Taliban mouthpiece said.

The fire, which raged for a month, also killed more than 300 heads of cattle and contaminated the air, causing respiratory troubles in Pech district and its outlying villages, the station added.

Lacking the means and expertise to fight the spreading fire, the Taliban appealed for international help to bring it under control, a call which apparently went unnoticed.

According to the radio, 2.6 per cent of Afghanistan's soil is covered with forests, mostly in eastern and southern parts of the country.

The thriving cross-border logging business has sped up the current alarming rate of deforestation throughout Afghanistan, experts said.

They also added that short of other energy sources, local people heavily rely on firewood, particularly oak, which comes from the southern forests, for cooking and heating. —AFP

DAWN

07 JUL 1999

NATION 15 JUL 1999

# Afghan donors call for reconciliation

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - A delegation of the Afghan donors visited Afghanistan and held talks with Taliban leaders on host of issues, focussing on peace process, human rights and terrorism, UN sources said Wednesday.

The delegation met Taliban Foreign Minister Mulla Mohammad Hasan and apprised him of the decisions of the Afghan Support Group (ASG) held in Stockholm last month, the sources said.

A total of 16 Afghanistan donor countries, UN agencies and NGOs attended the meeting, which had expressed serious concern over the lack of national reconciliation and continued hostilities in the war-torn Afghanistan. The meeting observed that military solution is no answer to Afghan turmoil and called for political solution to the 21-year crisis.

The delegation has proceeded to northern Afghanistan for talks with the opposition northern alliance. All member countries of the ASG still recognize the ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani as the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan.

The donors conveyed to the Taliban leadership their concern over the continued fighting, human rights violations and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and urged the ruling militia to put an end to hostilities, respect to human rights and take measures to combat drug trafficking.

Some members of the ASG groups are Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Switzerland Japan Russia, Sweden Denmark Finland and the United States.

"They told Taliban that the donors can not take part in long-term reconstruc-

tion planning of the war-shattered country until durable peace is restored," the sources said.

The ASG Stockholm meeting had considered the needs of the war-battered country but had made no commitments.

The aid agencies had appealed for 112 million dollars for priority sectors last year. Against that donors pledged 42 million dollars but half way through the year had actually disbursed only 29 million dollars.

Almost all UN agencies, dealing with Afghanistan, are facing funding crisis and they need money to continue their respective activities.

A UNHCR official said last month in Islamabad that despite the continued desire of substantial numbers of Afghan refugees to return to their homes UNHCR suffered its worst-ever funding crisis for its Afghanistan programme during 1998, and the outlook is looking bleak for 1999.

By October 1998, funding for refugee repatriation and reintegration had virtually dried up altogether, even though Afghans, once again, were the largest assisted returnee group anywhere in the world with 107,000 returnees going back with UNHCR assistance during the course of the year he said.

The UNHCR appealed last year for US\$23 million but received only US\$10.3 million. "This year we had launched appeal for US\$16.7 million but we have so far received only US\$6.2 million. The UNHCR was forced in September last year to start slashing reintegration projects inside Afghanistan and was having trouble paying its staff."

## Rain extinguishes big Afghanistan forest fire

KABUL (AFP) - Steady rain finally extinguished a big forest fire in the eastern Afghan province of Konar after the ruling Taliban's plea for international aid remained unanswered, Radio Shariat said Tuesday. "Thankfully, heavy and steady rain completely extinguished the big forest fire in Pech valley of Konar after it destroyed 30 square kilometers of jungle and 130,000 logs," the Taliban mouth-piece said.

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taminated the air, causing respiratory troubles in Pech district and its outlying villages, the station added.

Lacking the means and experience to fight the spreading fire, the Taliban, which controls about 80 per cent of Afghanistan, appealed for international help to bring it under control, a call which apparently went unnoticed.

According to the radio, 2.6 per cent of Afghanistan's soil is covered with forests, mostly in eastern and southern parts of the country.

NATION

## 3 among former Afghan deputy speaker killed

QUETTA (APP) - Three persons including a former Afghan deputy speaker were shot dead in Sattlite town, police said on Wednesday night.

According to reports after offering prayer former Afghan deputy speaker Abdul Ahad Popalzai was coming out from mosque, two unidentified armed men opened indiscriminate fire on him, as a result of which, Abdul Ahad Popalzai and two passers-by Sher Mohammad and Nisar Ahmed died on the spot.

The killers escaped after committing the crime. Police registered a case against unidentified killers and started investigation.

## Afghan National Party launched

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Various nationalist elements in the NWFP, have launched a separate progressive political party with the name of Afghan National Party (ANP).

Announcement to this effect was made by Patron-in-Chief of ANP, Khairul Hakeem Hakeemzai and Secretary General Ibrar Yusufzai while addressing a joint Press conference here on Saturday.

The new nationalist party would wage struggle for renaming the province, attainment of provincial autonomy and restoration of the status of smaller nationalities in the country, they added.

## Afghan leader laid to rest

QUETTA (PPI)-Former Deputy Speaker Afghanistan Abdul Ahad was laid to rest here Saturday.

It may be recalled here that Abdul Ahad along with two colleagues, Nisar and Sher Muhammad, was gunned down at Satellite Town, Quetta couple of days ago when they were coming out of a mosque after Maghrib prayers.

Abdul Ahad was 74 years old. His son told newsmen that he had no enmity with anyone.

Slained Abdul Ahad was a close associate of King Zahir Shah and he was a leader of Afghan National Liberation Front.

NATION 07 JUL 1999

NATION

10 JUL 1999

15 JUL 1999

NATION 18 JUL 1999

DAWN

16 JUL 1999

## Afghan leader two others, shot dead

By Our Staff Correspondent

QUETTA, July 15: A former vice-chairman in the parliament of the deposed King of Afghanistan Zahir Shah, Abdul Ahad Popalzai, was shot dead by unknown assailants along with two other Afghans here late on Wednesday night.

Popalzai received 11 bullets mostly on his face, said a senior police officer of the Satellite Town police station. The bullets completely disfigured his face, he added. He said the assailants were three in number who fired from a close range with automatic weapons.

Popalzai was the chief of Karzai tribe, a clan of Popalzai. He was

attacked while returning home after prayers.

The assailants escaped from the scene after committing the crime. The bodies of the three victims were brought to hospital by police.

The local police have registered a case against unknown armed men and a team comprising senior police officers has been set up for investigation.

The cause of killing could be an old enmity, police claimed. However, Hamed Karzai, younger son of 74-year-old Abdul Ahad, said his father had no enmity with any group or person.

## Afghan tribes denounce Ahad Kharzai's murder

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR The elders of various tribes from southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan in their traditional jirga have denounced brutal assassination of former parliamentarian Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai and stated it an act of those who are reluctant to let return of peace and tranquility in that war affected country.

The jirga held at Miranshah, headquarter of North Waziristan Agency was attended by elders from Paktya, Paktika, Khost, Logar, Zabul and other provinces of Afghanistan and addressed besides others by Haji Badshah Khan Zadran, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam, Haji Khan Sardar, Malik Momin Khan, Dr. Baz Mohammad Khan and others.

The speakers in their speeches have expressed their grave concern over the brutal assassination of late Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai and stated it a great loss

for Afghanistan and its people. They reminded that since invasion of the former Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the late Afghan parliamentarian has made hectic efforts for getting just right of self determination for the Afghans who have been made hostages by a few war mongers at behest of their foreign masters. Similarly, they reminded about the contribution of late Karzai who always extended maximum support and cooperation to the UNO, OIC and other internal and external mediators for finding out a negotiated solution to the conflict.

The Jirga through a resolution urged UNO, OIC and Pakistan to take an early notice of Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai murder and expose the real culprits before the world. Likewise, the meeting has demanded of the host government to take early steps for protecting lives and properties of the Afghan elders residing either in Quetta and Peshawar or in other cities and towns of Pakistan.

### Taliban-sponsored rally against US in Jalalabad today

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - A Taliban sponsored demonstration will be held today after Jumma prayer at Jalalabad, eastern city of Afghanistan, against the renewed US attempts of building pressure on Taliban government for the extradition of Saudi millionaire Ossama ben Laden.

The Peshawar-based representatives of Taliban are likely to accompany a media team to the site of demonstration. In this connection pro-Taliban parties and leaders are also being contacted. This is the first ever demonstration being organised on official level in the wake of the speculations about the expected US airstrikes against Afghanistan. Two years back a demonstration was also held by the Taliban at Kabul as a reaction to the American airstrikes against Afghanistan in which an Italian national was killed and several foreign missions were damaged.

NATION

30 JUL 1999

DAWN

28 JUL 1999

# Afghan factions urged to stop fighting

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** — Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam, a religious figure from Paktya province of Afghanistan has expressed concern over fresh round of fighting between the warring factions, and has called for an early negotiated solution to the issue.

In a Press release issued here Wednesday, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom said that it is crystal clear that no one could get his objectives or maintain it through military ways for a long time.

He viewed that fighting and confrontation could destroy Afghanistan therefore, global community needs to force both sides for a permanent and durable cease-fire.

Expressing concern over the inhuman attitude of rival Afghan leaders, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom said that they have lost credibility among the masses. "Neither Ustad Rabbani nor Mullah Omer could govern Afghanistan as they are responsible for the destruction of Afghanistan and killing of its people," he remarked.

In this connection, he said that former king Mohammad Zahir Shah had initiated a struggle to mobilise the Afghans for meeting their responsibilities at this crucial stage. He called upon the world countries to support such efforts.

Referring to the frequent USA threats in connection with its get Osama Bin Laden drive, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom said that Afghanistan and its people experienced billion of rockets, missiles, shells and other sophisticated weapons in the last two decades.

He added that Afghanistan couldn't afford further bloodshed, therefore,

Osama Bin Laden needs to leave Afghanistan. He was of the view that presence of Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan has not only endangered lives of the already war-affected people but it could harm the image of Afghanistan.

Without mentioning name of ex-Secretary Maulana Sami Ull Haq who a few days ago said that they would protect Osama Bin Laden, Maulvi Qayoom suggested him to invite Osama Bin Laden into Pakistan from Afghanistan for this purpose.

He added that soil of Afghanistan and its innocent people is being used for other interests in the last 20 years but such uncertain situation of that country has become beneficial to some self-interested religious-cum-political figures of Pakistan.

He also denounced the complicated role of United Nations towards Afghanistan and said that it had proved that UN high ups were reluctant to honour wishes of the war-affected Afghans. In the last 20 years, the so-called special representatives and their subordinates have earned million of dollars in return of their assignments in Afghanistan.

## 'Critiques govt policies'

PPP central leader and former Chief Minister, Aftab Sherpao, has said that the wrong policies of the present government have left Pakistan isolated on international level.

In a statement on Wednesday he said that the foreign and media policies of the government are characterized by contradictions, saying that almost a victorious war on Kargil front was lost by the unwise rulers on negotiation table at Washington.

## Attack on bin Laden feared Arab families flee Jalalabad

**ISLAMABAD**, July 20: Several Arab families have fled eastern Afghanistan fearing for their lives after the reported presence there of wanted Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, an Afghan news service said on Tuesday.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted a witness from the area as saying the families left their homes beside the Hadda agricultural farm near Jalalabad for unknown destinations after a British newspaper reported bin Laden was seen in the area.

The families feared the site could be the target of another deadly American missile strike like the one launched in August last year against suspected terrorist bases of bin Laden.

The statement followed the imposition of U.S. economic sanctions against the Taleban for links with bin Laden.

The London Sunday Observer reported this month that bin Laden was spotted in the hills around Jalalabad.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth, leading the U.S. delegation at an eight-nation meeting in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent to discuss the Afghan conflict, said on Monday he had met the Taleban representatives to renew a request for them to hand over bin Laden.

The US secretary Inderfurth was attending the meeting of the so-called "six plus two" group — six countries having common borders with Afghanistan plus the United States and Russia — trying to end the prolonged Afghan civil war. — Reuters

Some of them have stayed because of their differences with authorities in their own countries or to prepare for an Islamic jihad (holy war) elsewhere.

Hadda had a good number of Arab families when bin Laden also lived there several years ago but

## Afghan women have full business opportunities

By Sadaqat Jan

ISLAMABAD - The Afghan women have proved that how entrepreneurial spirit can be harnessed if they are given a helping hand to begin with. In spite of being considered a rigid society, it allows its women to set up small business in order to share the economic burden with their men, according to Aina, the UN quarterly magazine on Afghanistan.

Those women who want to work are being helped out by Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings (GGLS) programme which is being run by Dutch and Swedish governments, UNISEF with the funding from UNHCR in Northern Afghanistan.

The programme, first of its kind in Afghanistan since 1995 has disbursed no less than 17,000 loans worth over a million of dollars, says the UN magazine.

The idea of GGLS was taken from Bangladesh where it proved to be highly successful as far as increasing income of a family was concerned by extending loans to women. "A small loan of between 30 to 200 dollars allows a woman to buy raw materials for embroidery or carpet weaving, start a small shop or bakery or raise livestock.

The UN Magazine quoted a number of examples in which both skilled and unskilled women were provided loan

and they had been able not only to repay loan but also generate income. "The project proved remarkably resilient and the high repayment rates have shown the credit-worthiness of women", the Magazine said.

The programme operates in two regions of northern Afghanistan: around Andkhoy in Faryab province and Mazhar-e-Sharif in Balkh province.

The project is administered by local couples called promoters, who travel to the project areas, receive repayments, discuss problems and ensure that groups are meeting regularly, Aina says.

The magazine says ultimate aim of the project is to create a local management organisation or village bank to take over from the foreign donors and putting it firmly in local hands for a sustainable future.

Afghanistan's political turbulence and the possibility of more disruption in future have meant both delays and a reappraisal of how such a successor organisation should be set up, Aina notes. To overcome soaring inflation and Afghan's rapid devaluation against the US dollar all transactions are made in dollars.

Security and fighting in the region did affect the project's operation in 1997 and 1998. "Despite the turmoil in many areas, the economy has recovered and the project returned to normal," says the Magazine.

## Osama not leaving Afghanistan: spokesman

KABUL, July 30: Afghanistan ruling Taliban Friday denied press reports that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden was planning to leave Afghanistan.

"It is an absolutely baseless report that Osama has either left or is planning to leave Afghanistan," Maulwi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, senior Taliban spokesman, said.

Earlier, the Afghan Islamic Press reported that bin Laden had decided to leave Afghanistan and seek sanctuary in another Islamic country because of fears the United States might attack him.

There were reports last week that people were fleeing the outskirts of Jalalabad, where bin Laden reportedly was hiding out. Local Taliban officials denied any such exodus, and the city appeared to be bustling normally earlier this week.

Taliban announced earlier this year that Osama was missing and that they had no information about his whereabouts. However, Mutawakil in an BBC interview earlier this month admitted that Osama was in Afghanistan under tight security.

"He has been a guest of Afghan people since the Afghan jihad against the Soviet forces and will remain so," the Taliban spokesman said.

Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar last week ruled out extradition of Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan and said that the United States had no legal rights to demand his extradition.

Omar said the Taliban would protect Osama with their blood.

The US Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth demanded of the Taliban delegation in the last week UN-sponsored talks in Tashkent to expel Osama from Afghanistan.

Mutawakil said bin Laden was not allowed to carry out any political activities from Afghanistan or even give press interviews.—NNI

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## Afghan TV station defies Taliban

FAIZABAD—Perched on a peak that hangs over a deep valley in the Hindu Kush a few miles from Afghanistan's border with China and Central Asia, the country's last vestige of the 20th century continues to flourish.

The television station, which broadcasts three hours a night to homes within a 10 mile range, overlooks Faizabad, says a report in *Daily Telegraph*.

Its population of 100,000 has no electric power, so only about 5 000 people who can afford car batteries or generators are linked up. The station runs off a generator powered by the diesel engine.

Faizabad, in Badakhshan province, is the base for the Afghan Northern Alliance, fighting the Taliban militia that rules more than 80 per cent of the country.

When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 it banned all entertainments, including music, television, videos and sports.

Anyone caught with a television set or videos in Taliban controlled areas can expect a beating and a six month jail sentence.

The Faizabad station is a model of technical ingenuity under incredibility hardship.

Engineer Muhammad Din, director of Badakhshan TV, said: "We have no equipment less than 15 years old, few video cassettes and only three dilapidated cameras to record new programmes. We have to cobble together spare parts when there's breakdown, but we survive." Mr Din runs old Iranian, Indian and American films such as Rambo several times a week. "We just cut out the kissing parts," he says.

He also runs old documentaries about the Afghan Mujahideen's war against the Soviet Union in the Eighties and a short news bulletin every night, often read by a woman who keeps her face uncovered although her head is draped in a scarf.

## Osama 'agrees' to leave Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD(AFP) - Osama bin Laden who is wanted by the United States has agreed with the ruling Islamic Taliban militia to leave Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said Friday quoting sources close to him.

Saudi Arabian millionaire bin Laden is looking for asylum in another country, according to the agency which operates from Peshawar in Pakistan.

But it did not name which countries he had approached.

The United States has posted a five-million-dollar reward for any information leading to the arrest of bin Laden, accusing him of being behind the twin bombings of US embassies in Africa in August 1998.

The unnamed source told AIP if any Muslim country offered to take bin Laden and invited him the Taliban militia "is ready to extend full cooperation."

"Osama bin Laden has taken the decision in view of the possibility of an attack by the United States against Afghanistan and to ease difficulties being faced by the host country because of his presence," the source told AIP.

Although bin Laden's stay in Afghanistan had become increasingly difficult because of the danger of a US attack and the militia's curtailment of his activities, the Taliban "will never oust him



forcibly," the source said.

The report from AIP, a usual conduit for Taliban statements, did not carry any immediate comment from the Islamic militia.

Last August, Washington launched cruise missile attacks on suspected bin Laden terrorist camps in Afghanistan to hit back for the August 7 bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam which killed 224 people.

Bin Laden, who has been stripped of his Saudi nationality, is widely hailed by radical Islamic forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a hero of Islam.

A pro-Taliban Pakistani religious party, Jamiat Ulema Islam, has held two large rallies this month in Karachi and Peshawar warning Islamic forces would retaliate if the United States attacked Afghanistan.

The Taliban leadership has consistently refused US demands to expel him despite mounting pressure, rejecting allegations of terrorism against him and underscoring protection for bin Laden according to Islamic laws.

Washington earlier this month imposed economic sanctions against Afghanistan for harbouring the Saudi scientist.

And in late June, it closed six of its embassies in Africa for fear of further attacks.

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# Taliban will not extradite Osama bin Laden

From Our Correspondent

WASHINGTON-The Taliban movement in Afghanistan says it will not extradite Saudi exile Osama bin Laden to the United States to face trial here.

The Taliban's chief spokesman, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, said Taliban were prepared to negotiate with the US and others about bin Laden, and the accusations levelled at him, provided "these states prove such accusations". So far, he said, the US failed to present any proof showing his involvement in any terrorist act.

The comments appeared to be a response to a US offer to negotiate with the Taliban to bring bin Laden to trial in connection with the attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The United States has suddenly intensified get-Osama campaign.

The subject is believed to have figured during Clinton-Nawaz meeting here last week apart from Kargil. Another topic which was broached by Clinton was non-proliferation amid reports that Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan made an unusual visit to Pakistan's sensitive nuclear and missiles sites two months ago.

Muttawakil said that Taliban had no extradition agreements with any country. The spokesman said the Taliban would try bin Laden in accordance with Islamic law.

He said it would be impossible to expect the Taliban to hand over these individuals or accept demands that they leave Afghan territory. The offer followed President Clinton's imposition of trade and financial sanctions on the Taliban in an effort to persuade them to hand over bin Laden.

On Thursday, the Taliban acknowledged that the militant Saudi millionaire was in the country, and that he was looking after his security. A spokesman for the movement said it was open to the possibility of negotiations on his future.

State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley responded by saying: "We would welcome the opportunity to negotiate bin Laden's return to face justice. We continue to urge the Taliban to resolve this issue. Bringing bin Laden to justice remains our bottom line."

The US government says it has faced contradictory messages from the Taliban over the last weeks. "The Taliban has been trying to send signals," James Foley said. "We've seen press reports that they want to negotiate with us ... other reports say that they have no intention to turn him over and that he is protected in Afghanistan."

In an exclusive interview with the BBC Pashto Service, the Taliban's chief spokesman, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, had said a Taliban intelligence unit was overseeing bin Laden's movements and activities. He said bin Laden was not

able to carry out any terrorist attacks from Afghan soil. Analysts read this statement as a hint that the Saudi exile could be under house arrest in Afghanistan.

Mr Muttawakil added the information on bin Laden was kept secret to maintain the safety of ordinary Afghans. Last August, the US launched cruise missile attacks on targets in Afghanistan suspected of being connected to the Saudi dissident.

He was recently added to the FBI's "10 most wanted" list, with a \$5m reward.

Meanwhile the Taliban leadership has said it can guarantee the safety of all Americans in the country. The announcement was made by a spokesman for the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar of the few Americans in the country, most work for aid agencies.

In another development the United Nations has said more than one-million people in Afghanistan will need food aid in the next 18 months because of a drop in cereal production this year.

Two UN agencies, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Agency, said the country faced a shortfall of more than three-hundred-thousand tons of cereals, because the mildest winter in 40 years had produced little snow and so deprived crops of melt water.

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## Taliban deny Pakistan army help

KABUL, July 15: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban movement on Thursday denied reports thousands of Pakistani troops had joined its ranks for a major offensive on its last main foe.

"The allegations by the opposi-

tion and some news agencies about the entrance to Afghanistan of Pakistani military men for fighting are totally baseless," said Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's information and culture minister, in a statement.—Reuters

US again asks Taliban to expel Osama

## Protection to Osama at all costs: Omar

Security beefed up around US facilities

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD – Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar in a forceful statement Tuesday defended Osama bin Laden and expressed his disappointment over the fact that not a single Muslim country was found to host bin Laden due to US pressure.

"I feel sorry for those Afghans and Muslims of the world who adopt themselves with American norms and systems, but not with the norms and systems of Quran," said Mullah Omar in a statement titled, "Recent stand of Amirul-Momenin on Osama bin Laden", issued by the Embassy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Islamabad.

The Taliban supreme leader said the Muslims would be astonished that "how it might be possible that in the whole Islamic world not even a single country is found for a Muslim (Osama bin Laden) to live in, because of the Americans."

Mullah Omar's statement on Osama bin Laden is a clear reaction from Taliban side over the renewal of US demand, asking Taliban to hand over Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to Washington. The US Under Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth has revived the demand of handing over Osama to US during a meeting between Taliban Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi and Karl Inderfurth. The meeting took place

during the recent 6+2 group conference held at Tashkent.

Taliban's Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi later admitted that members of 6+2 group raised the issue of Osama bin Laden. In an interview with VOA, he said the group members alleged Taliban for providing bases to terrorists.

Mullah Omar's recent statement from his base in Kandhar once again makes clear the Taliban stand on Osama bin Laden—that Taliban would not hand over the Arab dissident to US or any other country.

The Clinton administration accuses Bin Laden of masterminding the two US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed more than 250 people on August 7, 1998.

US believes bin Laden is living in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. On the other hand, Taliban told the world a few months back that Osama was missing and was out of their contact.

Led by its belief that Osama is still in Afghanistan, US imposed curbs on Af-

ghanistan on July 6, 1999 to punish Taliban for hosting the Arab dissident. The US demands that the Taliban expel bin Laden to the United States or to a third country where he would face justice for alleged crimes.

Besides imposition of curbs, US also attacked the alleged bases of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and Sudan in August 1998. The US air-strikes on Afghanistan received a public anger in Afghanistan and the rest of the Islamic belt.

The US has placed bin Laden on the FBI's "10 most wanted list" last month with a US \$5 million reward offered for information leading to his arrest.

The US Under Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth has again asked Taliban to hand over Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to Washington. The issue came under discussion during meeting between Taliban Information Minister, Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi and Karl Inderfurth.

In an interview with VOA, Muttaqi admitted that the participants of the Six plus two group did refer to Osama's issue. Most of them said that terrorist are living in the Taliban controlled areas in

### Taliban not to succumb to US pressure on Osama: Omar

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – The supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid has said they would not surrender to the US demands saying Washington does not have the right to ask for the extradition of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

In a statement on Sunday, he said Taliban would welcome to embrace martyrdom but would never succumb to the demands for expulsion of the Saudi dissident Osama.

The statement followed the US State Department warning to the American citizens in Pakistan asking them to be much careful as the Afghan extremists are planning to attack US interests in Pakistan.

The United States has since long been demanding the expulsion of the Saudi dissident as Washington has accused him having hands in the US embassies bombings in Kenya and Tanzania last year.

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Afghanistan and these areas have turned into terrorists bases, he said. "We dismissed these assertions with arguments and told them that during our rule, none of terrorist had ever entered into Afghanistan" said Muttaqi.

He said that Taliban have not brought bin Laden into Afghanistan rather they have inherited him from the previous regime. Those opposing Osama were earlier supporting him, he said. Osama, he said, is not allowed to carry out operation against others. Not only Osama but nobody is allowed to use the Afghan territory against others, Muttaqi said.

**Miangul Naeem from Peshawar reports:** As the speculated 'get Osama' operation is again gaining space in print media, the security in and around foreign missions in the Provincial capital on Tuesday has been beefed up and the foreign nationals have been directed to restrict their movement to their offices.

The busy road in front of the US Consulate at Peshawar cantonment, which was reopened for traffic a few months before after the resentment caused by the US strikes on Afghanistan cooled down, was again blocked for every kind of traffic.

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## Taliban deny information about Osama

KABUL, July 5: The Taliban said on Monday it had no information on reports that Osama bin Laden had moved to a new base in Afghanistan.

"We have no information whatsoever about this report. The Taliban have no agreement or information in this regard. We can't say more than that," Abdul Hai Mutmaen, a key Taliban spokesman, said.

"We can't say anything, whether he is here or out of the country. We have no clue about his presence

now," Mutmaen said.

He was reacting to a report in London's Sunday Observer that Bin Laden had established new bases near Jalalabad.

The Taliban said in February that Bin Laden had "disappeared" with his bodyguards and a special Taliban unit set up to watch over him and it had no clue as to his whereabouts. Washington says Bin Laden is still in Afghanistan and has not ruled out more strikes to neutralize him. —Reuters

Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassain Akhund will be holding formal talks with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz on Monday.

The other Afghan Ministers will be meeting their counterparts and discuss matters of mutual interest.

## Afghan FM due today

Minister of Communications as well as officials of these Ministers and some departments.

During the visit, the Afghan Foreign

The Afghan delegation includes Ministers of Information and Culture, Committee, Higher Education, Frontiers, Refugees and Martyred and Deputy

ISLAMABAD (APP) — Afghan Foreign Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassain Akhund arrives here Sunday at the head of a 14-member delegation for holding consultations on bilateral cooperation and issues relating to transit trade.

## Taliban shrug off US sanctions

PESHAWAR, July 7: Afghanistan's Taliban administration chief Mullah Mohammad Omar on Wednesday shrugged off sanctions recently announced by the United States on the militia for sheltering Osama bin Laden.

"We don't care about the American sanctions which were imposed due to the deep differences between the Taliban and the US government," the reclusive Taliban leader told the Peshawar-based private AIP news service by telephone from Kandahar.

"The United States has certain designs regarding Afghanistan" which had led to the differences between his militia and Washington, he said.

Omar said the United States had never demanded the expulsion of the dissident Saudi national when it was dealing with the previous Afghan government.

The Taliban leader said he had been unaware of Osama's whereabouts since the Taliban announced that the Arab had gone missing from the territory under its control, earlier this year.

President Clinton on Monday signed an executive order imposing financial sanctions that would deepen the international isolation of the Islamic militia.—dpa

## Taliban ready to discuss Osama issue with US

PESHAWAR (DPA) — Afghanistan's ruling Islamic Taliban movement Thursday said it was willing to discuss with the United States the issue of Osama bin Laden, the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) agency reported.

Taliban spokesman Wakeel Ahmed Mutawwakil told the Peshawar-based agency that Osama was living in Afghanistan, under special Taliban security.

On Monday President Bill Clinton imposed trade sanctions against Afghanistan for the Taliban's failure to hand over Osama to the United States.

Washington wants to try Osama on charges of sponsoring attacks on American interests worldwide, including last August's devastating bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which more than 200 people were killed and 4,000 were wounded.

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar Wednesday shrugged off the sanctions imposed for sheltering Osama bin Laden, saying his administration was not aware of his whereabouts.

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# Osama still in Afghanistan, say Taliban

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ISLAMABAD, July 8: The Taliban said on Thursday that Osama bin Laden was still in the country under a special Taliban-led guard.

Confirmation of Bin Laden's whereabouts was made public by the movement's chief spokesman, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, in a telephone call to the independent Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

"Osama bin Laden is in Afghanistan but nobody knows anything about him except the specific commission (guards), which is good for his safety," the official told the agency.

Mutawakil was speaking the day after the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, said he had no idea of the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.

Mutawakil's statement suggested that the Taliban had been in contact with a special guard it placed on Bin Laden earlier this year before announcing in February that he had "disappeared" and his whereabouts were not known.

The specially appointed guard was supposed to shadow Bin Laden and protect him and also to enforce Taliban demands that the reclusive ex-millionaire not use Afghanistan as the base for any military operations.

The Taliban official said "all the restrictions" were still on Bin Laden, who has called for the withdrawal of US troops from Saudi Arabia and the overthrow of the Saudi royal family.

Mutawakil said no one had proved Bin Laden's involvement in the bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which 250 people were killed.

"Nobody at present has any proof against Osama, but still he is blamed," the Taliban official complained. The Taliban instructed its supreme court to investigate the terrorism charges but the US and other states ignored the offer.

Mutawakil said the Taliban wanted to talk to the US about Osama.

"We are ready to talk with America over Osama. We want the matter to be solved, but nobody listens to us," he said.

On Wednesday an executive White House order banned trade with Taliban-held Afghanistan in what was seen as a political punishment, rather than an economic one.

Afghanistan exports little apart from raw opium, the main ingredient of heroin. The US said the value of its trade with Taliban-held

Afghanistan was worth about 24 million dollars a year last year, seven million dollars in US imports from the country.

The US sanctions follow the temporary closure of some US embassies in Africa after US officials said they were under suspicious surveillance.

The US and Britain have stopped their nationals working for the U.N. aid programme in Afghanistan for fear that they might be singled out for attack in retaliation for bombing raids on Iraq over its nuclear weapons programme.

**PAPERS:** Kuwaiti security forces have arrested an Arab man who was allegedly trying to smuggle false Kuwaiti citizenship papers to Osama bin Laden, according to a published report on Thursday.

In an exclusive report, al-Rai al-Aam newspaper reported Kuwaiti police arrested the unidentified Arab man on July 3 at Kuwait's southwestern border point of al-Salmi as he was trying to exit the country illegally.

After discovering that the man had been travel-banned in the Gulf state for failing to make court appearances, police searched his belonging and discovered a forged Kuwaiti citizenship certificate bearing the photograph of Bin Laden.

The paper said that when questioned about the forged document, the Arab man told police "that he was commissioned to deliver the false citizenship paper to Osama bin Laden."

The Arab national reportedly also told police "that Bin Laden visited Kuwait in 1996 disguised, and that he was hosted by a big Kuwaiti family, and that he managed to leave the country the same way he entered without revealing his identity."

Kuwait's ministry of interior said he had no knowledge thus far about security forces holding the Arab suspect allegedly linked to Bin Laden.

"I was surprised when I read the al-Rai al-Aam newspaper today," said a spokesman.

The US embassy in Kuwait recently issued a circular to its citizens in the country to be vigilant and on the alert for any possible terrorist attacks.

**READY FOR TALKS:** Mutawakil said that Taliban was willing to discuss with the United States on the issue of terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden.

— Reuters/dpa

## Taliban guarantee security for Americans

KABUL (AFP) - The hardline Islamic Taliban regime Saturday moved to reassure Washington that the security of all Americans living inside Afghanistan would be guaranteed.

"All the lives of Americans in Afghanistan are safe," Taliban supreme leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, said in an announcement from the militia's defacto capital of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan.

"For any American coming here with a visa, or official government documents, their security is guaranteed," Omar said, according to his official spokesman, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil.

No diplomatic relations exist between the Taliban and Washington, however, the US government has become incensed by the militia which continues to provide sanctuary for the alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Washington suspects bin Laden of plotting attacks on the US embassies in the East African cities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam last August which killed 224 people.

Fear of terrorist attacks, presumably from bin Laden or his network, late last month prompted Washington to close six of its embassies in Africa. Five have reopened but the mission in Madagascar remains closed.

Bin Laden was implicated in the bombing of New York's World Trade Center in 1993 and of a US military complex in Saudi Arabia in 1996 but Washington diplomacy and a five-million-dollar reward have failed to dislodge bin Laden.

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# Pakistan places Tashkent Declaration on public record

ISLAMABAD (Internews) - The government of Pakistan on Thursday officially placed the text of the Six-plus-Two group's Tashkent Declaration, signed by it earlier this week in the Uzbekistan capital, on public record.

The Six-plus-Two meeting on Afghanistan was attended by deputy foreign ministers of China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, the United and the United Nations secretary-general's special envoy on Afghanistan.

The meeting ended with the signing on July 19 of the Tashkent Declaration and according to the government record, the following is the text of the Declaration:

Title: "Tashkent Declaration on the Fundamental Principles of a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan."

Text: "The deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the Six-plus-Two group, consisting of the states bordering on Afghanistan - the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan - as well as the Russian Federation and the United States of America, having met in [the Uzbek capital] Tashkent on 19th-20th July 1999 with the participation of Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi, having considered the situation in Afghanistan, being sincere friends of the Afghan people and wishing peace and prosperity for Afghanistan, have affirmed the following principles. "We express the profound concern of our governments at the continuing military confrontation in Afghanistan which is posing a serious and growing threat to regional and international peace and security.

"We remain committed to a peaceful political settlement of the Afghan conflict, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations, and we, in particular, recall the "points for discussion" and the "issues on which general understanding have been achieved," adopted earlier by the countries of the Six-plus-Two group.

"We confirm that the United Nations, as a universally recognised mediator, must continue to play a central and impartial role in international efforts to achieve a peaceful solution of the Afghan conflict and we confirm again our full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. "We confirm again our firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan.

"We express our profound concern about the violations of human rights, including those of ethnic minorities and women and girls, as well as the violations of international humanitarian law that are taking place in Afghanistan.

"We are deeply worried about the

steady increase in the cultivation, production and illicit trafficking of narcotics and the illegal sale of arms, which have far-reaching unfavourable consequences not only for the region but beyond it as well.

"We are also concerned about the use of Afghan territory, especially areas controlled by the Taliban to conceal and train terrorists, and about the fact that dangerous consequences of such actions can be seen in Afghanistan, in the neighbouring countries and far beyond its borders. "Following the aforementioned, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. "We are convinced that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict and this must be settled through peaceful political negotiations with the aims of establishing a multi-ethnic and fully representative government on a wide bases.

2. "Accordingly, we urge the sides in Afghanistan to resume political negotiations aimed at achieving these goals.

3. "With the purpose of assisting the cessation of hostilities, which we consider essential, we have further agreed not to provide military support to any Afghan sides and to prevent the use of our territories for such purposes. We call upon the international community to take identical measures to prevent the delivery of weapons to Afghanistan.

4. "We express our readiness to promote direct negotiations between the Afghan sides under the auspices of the United Nations in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and Security Council of the United Nations and this Declaration in order to conclude an inter-Afghan agreement on the implementation of paragraph one mentioned above. As members of the Six-plus-Two group we are fully determined to provide our individual and collective support to this process.

5. "We think that the process of negotiations must be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and may consist of two stages.

(a) "The main purpose of the first stage is to adopt measures to reinforce mutual trust. These measures will include:

(i) "The signing of an agreement on an immediate and unconditional ceasefire without any pre-conditions;

(ii) "The holding of direct negotiations at this stage between the plenipotentiary delegations of the two main conflicting sides - the United Front [the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan] and the Taliban movement, including on:

- the exchange of POWs;
- lifting internal blockades and opening roads for reciprocal trade and the delivery of humanitarian aid on the territories controlled by various Afghan groups.

(b) "The main purpose of the second stage is to draw up basic principles of the future state structure of Afghanistan by the Afghans themselves and to form on a wide basis a multi-ethnic and fully representative government within a short period of time.

6. "Those of us who have common borders with Afghanistan, proceeding from a common desire to take effective and coordinated measures to combat illicit drug-trafficking, have agreed, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, to step up effective and coordinated measures to combat illicit drug-trafficking. In this connection, we recall and confirm the important role played by the United Nations Drug Control Programme in this process.

7. "We urge the Taliban movement to inform the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations about the results of their investigations into the killings of the diplomatic and consular staff of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e Sharif and of the correspondent of the Islamic Republic [of Iran] News Agency, and we call on the Taliban to cooperate fully with the international investigation into these killings with the purpose of punishing the guilty parties.

8. "We urge the Afghan sides, particularly the Taliban movement, to cease providing shelter to international terrorists and their organizations and training them and to cooperate with the efforts to bring terrorists to justice.

9. "We are fully determined to make every effort to encourage the Afghan parties to respect fully the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghan people in accordance with the basic norms of international law.

10. "We are prepared to cooperate with the new Afghan government which will be established in accordance with aforementioned paragraph one, in all aspects with the purpose of strengthening security and stability in Afghanistan and in the region, of returning Afghan refugees back to their native places and ensuring the soonest rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan through support from UN agencies and programmes, international financial organizations and donor countries.

11. "We call upon the international community to respond to the inter-institutional appeal on joint actions on rendering Afghanistan emergency humanitarian aid and rehabilitation assistance for the period between 1st January and 31st December 1999, voiced by the [UN] Secretary General, bearing in mind also the existence of the emergency targeted fund for Afghanistan. Support for demining is of particular importance.

12. "We call upon the international community to support these proposals and take coordinated steps to ensure the soonest settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan and we also call upon all forces in Afghanistan to show political will and wisdom, overcome their disagreements and mutual hostilities and not to miss a historic opportunity to achieve stable and long-lasting peace.

13. "The present Declaration is written in two originals, in English and Russian and both texts are equally authentic. Arranged in the city of Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, on 19th July 1999.

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# Taliban under pressure to resolve Osama issue

KABUL (AFP) - Increasing international isolation and mounting pressure from Washington has pushed Afghanistan's ruling Taliban into a fresh attempt to resolve the issue of Osama bin Laden.

Independent observers here and in Pakistan said the Taliban were responding to direct threats from the United States which would possibly include another military strike on Afghan soil.

'They know America is a super power and they have a choice, the Taliban can side with the US or they can continue to support bin Laden, which will achieve nothing for them,' a western military analyst said.

The analyst added bin Laden could now be under house arrest in Afghanistan, representing a significant change in the stance adopted by the Taliban's ruling elite.

On Thursday the Pakistan-based Af-

ghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted the Taliban authorities as confirming they were harbouring bin Laden, the Saudi alleged terrorist, and were seeking talks with Washington.

The report quoted Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmed as saying the 41-year-old Saudi millionaire was living in Afghanistan 'under the protection of a special security commission'.

Only the special commission knew bin Laden's precise whereabouts, he said.

Until the AIP report, the Taliban had maintained they did not know the whereabouts of bin Laden, whose presence in Afghanistan prompted the White House this week to slap sanctions against the Islamic militia.

'We are ready to hold talks with the United States on Osama,' Ahmed told AIP. 'We want to resolve the issue but nobody is willing to listen to us.'

Washington suspects bin Laden of

plotting bomb attacks on US embassies in the East African cities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam last August, which killed a total of 224 people.

Late last month, Washington closed six of its embassies in Africa citing fear of more terrorist attacks, presumably from bin Laden or his network.

While five of them have reopened, the mission in Madagascar remains closed.

Bin Laden was also implicated in the bombings of New York's World Trade Center in 1993 and of a US military complex in Saudi Arabia in 1996.

Despite ongoing diplomacy and a five-million-dollar reward, all Washington's efforts at dislodging bin Laden have so far been in vain.

On Wednesday Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar condemned the US sanctions as unjust and malicious and accused the US of adopting 'vindictive action because of mu-

tual differences'.

But analysts said the prospect of the Taliban gaining international recognition remained 'the dangling carrot' while the militia's grander designs of ending the country's long running civil war with a decisive offensive was another factor.

'Washington sees bin Laden as the major threat for Americans living all over the world and they are not going to tolerate his existence in Afghanistan, or anywhere else for that matter,' the analyst said.

'And under no circumstances will they recognise the Taliban as the legitimate head of state in Afghanistan while bin Laden is on the loose.'

The United Nations currently recognises the ousted government of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, although the issue of recognition is expected to be debated by the UN in September.

Another Pakistan-based analyst said the threat of a US military strike at a time when the Taliban is preparing for an all out summer offensive against Rabbani's military wing, the Northern Alliance, had influenced their thinking.

'Pressure is being applied through Pakistan to resolve this issue once and for all, and a repeat of last year's bombings can not be ruled out,' he said referring to last August's US cruise missile strikes on alleged bin Laden bases in Afghanistan.

In its latest travel warning, the US State Department reminded Americans that the US continued to reserve the right to stage military strikes against bin Laden.

The sanctions were announced by US President Bill Clinton and include a freeze on Taliban financial and property assets in the US and a ban on trade with the militia.

NATION

## Taliban conditionally ready for Osama's trial in third country

WASHINGTON (NNI) - Taliban say that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden could be tried in a third country except Saudi Arabia and the United States on the condition that the suspected terrorist agrees to it, reports VOA.

The broadcast referred to the report of a London-based Arabic daily, "Al-Sharq al-Ausat" quoting a spokesman of Taliban, Wakil Ahmed as saying that Laden would not be expelled from Afghanistan forcibly. He said the Saudi millionaire might have shifted to somewhere in Afghanistan. He said Laden was kept under the supervision of a special force so that he may not act against any other country.

Saudi Arabia and the United States are pursuing Bin Laden for his alleged involvement in several terrorist activities besides the bomb explosions in US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year.

## Afghan minister due today

ISLAMABAD, July 11: The foreign minister of Afghanistan, Mullah Mohammad Hassan, who arrives here on Monday, will hold talks with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz on matters of bilateral and regional interest, including repatriation of tens of thousands of Afghan refugees, who, after shifting from camps, were now living in almost all the cities of Pakistan.

Mullah Hassan, who will be accompanied by a 9-member delegation, will also meet senior officials of the ministries of foreign Affairs and communications.

Afghan refugees have not only set up businesses in Pakistan but also occupied labour jobs, denying local people of their livelihood. —PPI

DAWN

12 JUL 1999

# Taliban ready for talks with US, Iran

KABUL (AFP) - Afghani Taliban leaders have told the United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi they are ready for fence-mending talks with both the United States and Iran, official media said Saturday.

Brahimi proposed the Islamic militia start talking to the US and Iran when he met the head of the Taliban ruling council Mulla Mohammad Rabbani on Friday, they said, adding Rabbani accepted the proposal.

'The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is always ready for talks with the United States and Iran,' the Taliban official daily newspaper *Heywad* quoted Rabbani as saying during the meeting with Brahimi. The Islamic militia is under pressure from the US for sheltering and refusing to expel alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden, wanted by Washington for the August 1998 bombings of American missions in East Africa.

The Taliban's relations with Iran, which supports the Afghani opposition Northern Alliance, have always been under strain.

Last year Iran massed thousands of troops on its border with Afghanistan after the killing of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in the north of the country, but the crisis was defused with UN mediation.

The UN envoy arrived here Thursday on a visit aimed at promoting a peace process between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance following a July 20-21 meeting between their representatives in Uzbekistan.

The Tashkent peace talks were held within a UN-sponsored group of eight countries, which has been trying to persuade the Afghani adversaries to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement.

The group is made up of six countries bordering Afghanistan — China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — plus the United States and Russia.

The Tashkent discussions produced no concrete results, but the delegates agreed to hold further talks in future.

NNI adds: Meanwhile, Taliban Information Minister Ameer Khan Muttaqi told the Peshawar-based Pushto daily "Wahdat" on phone from Kabul that the two leaders held constructive talks and discussed host of issues concerning Afghan conflict.

Taliban relations have been strained with the neighbouring Iran and the United States on host of issues. Ties soured between Iran and Taliban after the renegade militia fighters killed 10 Iranian diplomats and a journalist in the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif last year.

The presence of Saudi national Osama bin Laden is the main reason of strained relations between Washington and the rulers in Kabul. Taliban have rejected U.S demand for Osama's extradition.

"The UN envoy insisted on holding talks with the opposition. Our side made it clear to Brahimi that Taliban are not against dialogue but the rivals have never been sincere in talks," Muttaqi quoted Rabbani as telling Brahimi.

## Omar slams world for not recognising Taliban govt

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar Thursday slammed the international world for not recognising the Taliban government, saying "the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" enjoyed full public support.

"The foreign countries' opposition of the policies of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is neither inappropriate and unjust. The public opinion of the majority, and not a handful of defeated politicians, consider the Taliban as the representatives of the nation," Omar said in a statement.

Only three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have extend recognition to the Taliban as a government. The United Nations still considers the deposed President Burhanuddin Rabbani as the legitimate ruler of the country.

Omar said the Taliban were the genuine representatives of the people with complete control over 29 provinces, maintaining Islamic law, ensuring security to the lives and properties of the people.

The statement came after the Taliban launched a major offensive on the opposition Northern Alliance immediately after the UN-sponsored peace talks in Tashkent failed.

The Taliban leader said it was evident from the history that no force could rule the diverse Afghan nation by force. The fact that Taliban government has found acceptance and is continuing to be in power proves that the nation supports the Taliban, Omar said.

He said the Afghan nation supported the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and backed it so as to consummate the jihad and to reconstruct the war-ravaged country under the flag of Islam.

NATION 25 JUL 1999

NATION

30 JUL 1999

# Taliban chide UN for supporting opposition

NATION

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Monday accused Washington of hounding the militia over alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden and chided the United Nations for supporting the country's opposition.

In a rare outburst through the official media, Taliban authorities also said US President Bill Clinton based his foreign policy "on his personal complexes and sexual illness" and had turned bin Laden into a hero.

"The Clinton government has made Osama bin Laden an enemy of Americans and created fear and panic for them," the official Shariat weekly newspaper said in an editorial.

"Osama was in Afghanistan from long time as an ordinary Mujahed guest.

"He might have made some Mujahed utterances. That might be the case, but nobody has the proof that Osama has taken a step in practice against America or any other country," it said.

The hardline Islamic Taliban is facing increasing international isolation as its leadership continues to harbour alleged terrorist bin Laden, and curtails civil liberties by imposing a strict interpretation of Sharia law.

Washington suspects bin Laden of plotting attacks on two US embassies in East Africa last August which killed 224 people. The 41-year old Saudi dissident was also implicated in the bombing of New York's World Trade Center in 1993 and of a US military complex in Saudi Arabia in 1996.

Last week the US froze Taliban financial and property assets and slapped economic sanctions on the militia as part of diplomatic efforts aimed at forcing the militia to hand over bin Laden.

"From the very start ... the Clinton

administration has been hounding the Islamic Emirate and has stopped at nothing from hostile propaganda to military aggression against it."

"Under various excuses, it is waging both a cold and hot war,

"The Clinton administration put a reward of five million dollars on Osama, thus making him a hero against America, to frighten all Americans." This had, "caused much anti-American hatred in the region".

"In short, the foreign policy of the Clinton government, which is based on his personal complexes and sexual illness, is running against American interests," the editorial said.

The outburst coincided with claims by Taliban Foreign Minister, Mulla Mohammad Hassan, that the militia stood unduly accused thwarting peace efforts in Afghanistan where civil war has waged since 1992, while the UN supported "the murderers" in the alliance of ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

"In the areas under our control, peace and security has been established, the looting and plundering of state and people's property has stopped," Hassan told the official state-run Radio Shariat.

He said the Taliban, which has wrested control of most of Afghanistan, had faithfully attended UN orchestrated peace talks in March with representatives from Rabbani's opposition Northern Alliance, and agreed to a ceasefire.

"But the opposition — who are murderers of the Afghan people and do not want the war ended in Afghanistan — dragged the talks to a deadlock through various means and resumed the fighting," Hassan said.

## Taliban for talks with US, Iran

KABUL, July 24: Taliban leaders have told the United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi they are ready for fence-mending talks with both the United States and Iran, official media said on Saturday.

Brahimi proposed the Taliban start talking to the US and Iran when he met the head of the Taliban ruling council Mulla Mohammad Rabbani on Friday, they said, adding Rabbani accepted the proposal.

"Afghanistan is always ready for talks with the United States and Iran," the Taliban official daily newspaper Heywad quoted Rabbani as saying during the meeting with Brahimi.

Taliban are under pressure from the US for sheltering and refusing to expel Osama bin Laden, wanted by Washington for the alleged bombings of American missions in East Africa.

The Taliban's relations with Iran, which supports the Afghan opposition Northern Alliance, have always been under strain.

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the Taliban and the Northern Alliance following a July 20-21 meeting between their representatives in Uzbekistan.

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The Six Plus Two group is made up of six countries bordering Afghanistan — China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — plus the United States and Russia.

The Tashkent discussions produced no concrete results, but the delegates agreed to hold further talks in future.—AFP

NATION

30 JUL 1999

## Taliban see offensive as key to world recognition

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia sees a summer offensive it launched Wednesday as the key to total victory including the international recognition it craves, according to analysts.

The militia is focused on one outcome - destroying arch rival and military leader of the opposition Northern Alliance Ahmad Shah Masood, ending the five year civil war and winning international credibility.

Masood, ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani and their ethnic-based alliance comprising of Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen ethnic groups control just 20 percent of the country, with the remainder in Taliban hands.

But the opposition is recognised by the United Nations and all governments, except for Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as the country's legitimate government, despite being driven from the capital Kabul in 1996.

'The logic is if Masood can be defeated then the world will have to accept the Taliban as leaders of Afghanistan, give them a UN seat and deal with them officially,' one western military analyst said.

The militia's desire for international recognition has been thwarted by widespread condemnation of its strict interpretation of Islam, particularly its treatment of women, and for giving sanctuary to Osama bin Laden.

He is accused by the US of masterminding the simultaneous bombings of two embassies in east Africa last year.

The ethnic Pashtun Taliban is fighting for control of Afghanistan's north-eastern corner and Wednesday launched its summer campaign under a barrage of artillery fire, with tank and aerial support.

The opposition holds ground stretching from front lines 25 kilometres north of Kabul, across the Shamali Plains to the Panjsher Valley, and northwards to the Tajik border and eastwards to Pakistan.

Initially the offensive had been planned for Friday, July 9. But Taliban commanders said the start date was extended to the end of July due to doomed United Nations peace initiatives and because more troops were needed.

Asked to confirm speculation the Taliban had recruited volunteers from Islamic religious schools in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Yemen, Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, one commander from Khost province said: 'Yes, but you left out Chechnya.'

Independent sources confirmed Chechen Islamic troop support for the Taliban but added that the number of foreign fighters was small.

The commander also said the Taliban had three times raised its target for troop numbers, from 20,000 to 50,000 and then 100,000.

One Pakistan-based western diplomat said Taliban numbers were prone to exaggeration but a figure of 50,000 troops was probable and this was still double the highest previous estimate of the militia's strength, put at 25,000 men in 1997.

## Mullah Omar urges world recognition for Taliban

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, July 30: The supreme leader of Afghanistan's Taliban movement Mullah Mohammed Omar has urged the world community to recognise "the fact" that the Afghan nation has accepted the rule of Taliban.

In a press statement titled "announcement" which was faxed to the Peshawar based offices of the newspapers, Mullah Omar maintained that "the world community must recognise this fact," adding that "throughout the history (of Afghanistan) no one has ruled this nation by force".

Mullah Omar maintained that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established to spread Islam with the support and backing of the Mujahid nation. He said the Islamic law and order with complete security had been ensured in 29 provinces of Afghanistan (ruled by Taliban).

In an attempt to make the world community to change its perception about Taliban, the movement's supreme leader said that "it is hard to rule by force, therefore, acceptance and continuation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan implies that the Afghan nation supports the Taliban".

He said that importance should be given to the majority public opinion which, he said, was in favour of Taliban.

"Views of the defeated elements, who wrongfully portray themselves as the people's representatives, should not be paid any attention," he said giving the impression that the opposition movement in Afghanistan had no public support.

DAWN

31 JUL 1999

## Taliban to attend Tashkent moot

ISLAMABAD, July 17: Taliban have accepted Pakistan's request to participate in Six Plus Two talks which are scheduled to be held in Tashkent from July 19-20, said Foreign Office sources here on Saturday.

A two member Pakistani delegation led by Additional Secretary Foreign Office Iftikhar Murshad and Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Aziz Khan has already left for Tashkent to participate in the talks.

Afghanistan Foreign Minister Mohammad Hussain Akhund is expected to lead his country at the Six Plus two talks while Information Minister Maulvi Ameer Khan Mutaqee will assist him.

UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi earlier on Saturday had requested Pakistan to convince the Taliban leadership to reconsider their decision of not attending the meeting in Tashkent.

Brahimi, who arrived here from London on Saturday on his way to Tashkent to attend the forthcoming meeting of "Six Plus Two" on July 19-20, made this request at a meeting with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz.

"He requested the foreign minister to use his influence in convincing the Taliban leadership to reconsider their decision of not attending the meeting in Tashkent," a Foreign Office statement said.

The special envoy added that it will be in the interest of the Taliban, since they controlled the major portion (90 per cent) of Afghanistan, to attend the meeting and express their position to the six neighbouring countries of Afghanistan plus the United States and Russia.

The foreign minister briefed the special envoy about concerted efforts of the government of Pakistan in finding ways and means to bring peace to Afghanistan.

He hoped that the meeting of the Six Plus Two in Tashkent will make a positive contribution to the objective of restoration of durable peace in Afghanistan.—APP

## Taliban accept Pak request to attend talks in Tashkent

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NATION

18 JUL 1993

DAWN 18 JUL 1993

# Taliban, opposition ready to hold talks

TASHKENT (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban movement and the northern opposition alliance said Monday they were ready to start peace talks to end the country's long-running civil war.

'The Taliban leadership is interested in improving the situation in Afghanistan and is ready to conduct negotiations' with the opposition, said the militia's representative at a peace conference here, Mullah Muttaqi.

His counterpart from the Northern Alliance opposed to the Taliban, Doctor Abdullo, added: 'I want to confirm that we are interested in Afghan peace talks.'

The opposition official told a press conference that the negotiations could begin as early as Tuesday.

The news appeared to belie fears that both sides were gearing up for a fresh round of large-scale hostilities, a military build-up in Kabul having been highly visible in recent weeks.

The opposition has accused the Taliban of seeking to end the northern alliance's control over Afghanistan's north-eastern provinces.

Earlier UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi had warned that the peace process was at a critical stage.

'Until now we have witnessed the resumption of military activities in Afghanistan. If the six-plus-two fails to resolve the Afghan conflict, there will be doubts about its ability to launch peace initiatives,' he said.

The 'six-plus-two' groups China,

Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, whose deputy foreign ministers were in Tashkent, as well as Russia and the United States.

The grouping, together with Brahimi, is attempting to thrash out a peace formula acceptable to the Taliban, who control 80 percent of Afghanistan, and the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance commanded by Ahmad Shah Masood.

Opening the two-day meeting, Uzbek President Islam Karimov appealed for the belligerents to sign a raft of practical accords ahead of a wide-ranging political deal on the country's future.

He urged the two sides to sign deals covering a ceasefire, prisoner swap, mine clearance, return of refugees and demilitarisation.

Parallel talks should cover massive humanitarian aid and the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan's shattered economy.

A final peace deal could clear the way for a special UN General Assembly session on Afghanistan, said Karimov, 'which would symbolise the political recognition by the international community of the results of the agreement on restoring peace to this country.'

He warned that stability in Afghanistan was important for its neighbours and the international community.

'The world community is worried about what is going on in and around Afghanistan, notably the rise in international terrorism and extremism, drugs

See page

## Taliban, opposition ready to hold talks

From page 1

and arms trafficking and the radicalisation of Islam,' Interfax cited Karimov as saying.

Ahead of Monday's meeting regional analysts were sceptical that the two sides were ready for peace.

'The trouble is the opposition considers themselves as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and see the Taliban as just a recent phenomenon,' a political commentator from Kabul University said.

Burhanuddin Rabbani, ousted by the Taliban in 1996, and the opposition Northern Alliance remain recognised by the United Nations and most world governments, except Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Recognition remains the main goal of the Taliban militia.

'For the Taliban, recognition of their government has become a cherished issue, but this is being complicated by other issues like Osama bin Laden and the treatment of women,' one western observer said.

'And the authorities in Kandahar (the Taliban de facto capital) only decided to send representatives to Tashkent at the very last minute, which may not augur well.'

Osama, a 41-year old Saudi dissident, is wanted by the United States for the bombing of two US missions in East Africa which left 224 people dead last August, and a string of other alleged offences.

The Taliban has also attracted sharp criticism in the West for closing girls' schools, limiting female care and pushing women out of the workplace.

Women, particularly in Kabul, must be covered from head to toe in a traditional 'burqa' when in public. Music, western fashion, television, theatre and alcohol are also banned.

20 JUL 1999 NATION

NATION 05 JUL 1999

# Taliban appeal for medical aid as cholera epidemic feared

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Sunday issued an urgent appeal for international medical aid to deal with a major cholera epidemic which they said could hit up to 48,000 people.

Minister for Public Health Mulla Mohamad Abbas said 6,359 cases of acute diarrhoeal disease had been reported in recent weeks resulting in 55 deaths, and all were being treated as suspected cholera.

'The epidemic of cholera has occurred across Afghanistan in populated areas,' he said in a statement.

'The main source of the cholera is human waste in the water system that has been destroyed by two decades of war,' he said.

'We request ... for the world to send supplies to use in the struggle against and control of this epidemic.'

He said the epidemic was expected to hit up to 8,000 people in the months ahead in each of the six regions of Afghanistan where the outbreak was at its worst.

'Some of the strains of cholera have shown a resistance to traditional drugs,'

the minister added.

'The conclusions were based on eight test samples of suspected cholera which were sent to international laboratory testing by the World Health Organisation. Five were positive.'

In previous years local authorities working with the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have managed to control cholera outbreaks, which are fairly common during Afghanistan's summer.

However, Abbas said an unusually hot spring coupled with a further deterioration of the country's crippled water and sewage network had resulted in an earlier-than-usual outbreak.

Abbas said international help was needed in two forms.

Medical supplies, particularly the drugs tetracyclin, hestacyclin and ferazolidine, were needed to combat cholera strains that were proving resistant to traditional drugs, he said.

Secondly, repairs to Afghanistan's water supplies, sewage systems and waste management were urgently needed.

An experienced local taskforce of 435 doctors and nurses with a further 260 volunteers from the UN and NGOs had been working throughout the winter in preparation for the annual cholera outbreak, Abbas said.

But the scale had caught authorities off-guard.

Afghanistan has been wracked by war for some 20 years, with a home-grown insurgency against the post-1979 Soviet occupation succeeded by a debilitating civil war in the 1990s.

The Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic militia, seized the capital Kabul in September 1996 and now control around 80 percent of Afghanistan, with an opposition alliance holding northern regions.

Relations between the Taliban and foreign aid organisations have been strained.

Last month Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar issued a decree to ensure the protection of foreign aid workers after two foreign and eight local Red Cross personnel were beaten up.

## Taliban seek aid to fight cholera

KABUL, July 4: The Taliban on Sunday issued an urgent appeal for international medical aid to deal with a major cholera epidemic, which they said could hit up to 48,000 people.

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DAWN 05 JUL 1999

DAWN

25 JUL 1993

## Eight die in rocket attack on Kabul

PESHAWAR, July 24: At least eight persons were killed and more than a dozen injured when opposition forces fired a salvo of rockets in and around the Afghanistan capital of Kabul, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported on Saturday.

AIP quoted a spokesman of the ruling Taliban militia as saying that forces loyal to a northern alliance fired five rockets at Kabul and several others at nearby Shakardara in a 24-hour period up to Saturday afternoon.

The unnamed spokesman condemned the rocket attack which coincided with the visit of the UN special envoy on Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, to the war-rav-

aged Afghan capital.

He said Brahimi met with Taliban Foreign Minister Mulla Hasan Akhund and apprised him of the recent UN sponsored meeting in Tashkent, capital of the Central Asian state of Uzbekistan.

The so-called "six-plus-two" meeting brought together warring Afghan groups and six neighbouring countries along with the United States and Russia.

The UN peacemaker also held talks with the head of the Taliban ruling council, Mulla Mohammad Rabbani, who is said to have agreed to a dialogue with neighbouring Iran and the United States.—dpa

## Kabul hit by alliance rockets

PESHAWAR, July 27: Anti-Taliban forces fired three rockets into Kabul as the factional war in Afghanistan intensified on Tuesday, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Rockets landed near Khwaja Rawash airport early in the morning but there were no immediate reports of any damage, AIP said.

Artillery exchanges between the Taliban militia and its opponents have intensified north of the capital following the collapse of peace efforts by the tribal leaders in the Shakardara, Guldara and Koh-i-Safi war zone, the report said.

The Taliban have amassed 20,000 fighters in Tagab, Najrab and Koh-i-Safi areas but neither side has committed its infantry to the battle so far.

However local people fear that a large-scale fighting in the region and further north was imminent, AIP said.—dpa

## Rabbi appeals for help to leave Afghanistan

KABUL, July 8: One of Afghanistan's last Jews appealed on Thursday to the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Israeli government for cash and other help so he can leave the country.

Rabbi Isaac Levi, 60, said he was ailing and wanted to be reunited with his family who left Afghanistan almost a decade ago.

"I want to be reunited with my family and children so that they can take care of me in my old age," he told journalists.

He said the last time he heard from his wife, three sons and one daughter was eight years ago from Bombay in India.

"I have had no correspondence with them since then," Levi said.

"I ask the United Nations, the Red Cross and Israel to help me get out of here," he pleaded in a soft voice close to breaking.

Levi said he had not been harassed by the Taliban but complained of the lack of a Jewish congregation and the absence of support in the future.—AFP

## — aid flights cancelled

KABUL, July 27: Aid flights to Kabul were diverted or cancelled on Tuesday after opposition fighters fired rockets at the capital's military and civilian airport amid speculation of a fresh Taliban offensive.

An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) flight due to land at Kabul's Khwaja Rawash airport was diverted to Jalalabad, ICRC sources said.

The United Nations and Paktec, a US-based group flying foreign aid workers to and from Afghanistan, said it cancelled flights to Kabul for the day because of the rocketing.

Paktec said it had suspended all flights to Afghanistan until Aug 9 or 10 because of security concerns and "technical" problems.

There was no report of any damage from Tuesday's rocketing or of casualties from reported artillery exchanges overnight between the two forces.—Reuters

DAWN

08 JUL 1993

DAWN

28 JUL 1993

# Rockets attack on Kabul airport

KABUL (AFP) - The United Nations, Red Cross and private Pactec group were forced to divert flights into Kabul early Tuesday after 11 rockets struck the Afghan capital's airport, airport authorities said.

Flight operations for the UN and the Red Cross as well as officials of Pactec, a US-based group which transports foreign aid workers in and out of the country, confirmed the cancellation of the flights.

Following the rocket strike, opposition spokesman Abdullah said the Taliban could launch an attack against Northern Alliance positions north of Kabul any time.

Abdullah claimed the alliance had secured areas around Dara-i-Sogof in northern Samangan province over-

night after brief fighting that left three Taliban dead.

A Taliban spokesman was not available for comment and there was no independent confirmation of the claim.

'The capture of the areas takes place at a time when the Taliban intends to capture the whole of Afghanistan, but remains powerless to defend what they already control,' Abdullah said.

He said the frontline 25 kilometers north of Kabul were quiet overnight but 'we expect them to attack at any moment.'

Witnesses said three rockets, fired from positions held by the opposition Northern Alliance on mountain tops surrounding Kabul, hit the Kabul airport around 9:00 AM.

Airport authorities later confirmed

eight other rockets had been fired at the airport hours earlier at around 6:00 AM. One rocket struck as a UN flight was making its final approach to land, one witness said.

All three carriers fly routinely into Kabul landing planes between 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM.

The rocket strikes came amid Taliban accusations that the Northern Alliance has been provoking a major fight with the Islamic militia.

During a visit here last week the UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi appealed to both sides in Afghanistan's protracted civil war not to proceed with a much anticipated summer offensive, and urged both sides to declare a ceasefire and release prisoners.

But as the opposition Northern Alli-

ance rocketed Kabul airport, the Taliban told Brahimi any further talks would be unlikely.

'They have denied they are preparing for a major offensive,' Brahimi said Saturday of the Taliban. But he added: 'There are plenty of indications that both sides are building up. This is nothing new.'

Two rockets exploded in Kabul on Friday evening as Brahimi met the Taliban's second in command, Mulla Mohammad Rabbani.

Another three slammed into the capital early Saturday morning and eight civilian casualties, including two dead, were reported in heavy artillery shelling on both sides on the frontline 25 kilometres north of Kabul.

NATION 28 JUL 1997

## Kabul hospitals prepare for heavy casualties

KABUL (AFP) - A major military build-up for an offensive by the Taliban and opposition Northern Alliance on Wednesday has left its mark on Afghans who are already languishing after 20 years of war.

In Kabul, traders blamed the militia's plans for a sharp rise in prices.

They said fuel prices had risen 20-30 percent after the military and locals brought-up excess supplies of petrol, benzine and kerosene.

Meat prices had also suffered, according to butchers. One said troops had paid for anything on four legs; sheep, goats, donkeys, cattle and camels, to be used for clearing mine fields and to feed the troops.

'So we have a meat shortage and prices go up,' one butcher said.

However, a Taliban frontline commander, Omar Gul, said butchers exaggerated the situation, and added that tanks were usually used to clear anti-personnel mines, not cattle.

The traditional male garment, the shalwar kameez, was also in short supply after Talib troops stocked-up on the national dress which is worn in battle.

Some of Afghanistan's 100-odd expatriate staff — mostly humanitarian workers — have been advised by embassies in Islamabad to be prepared for an evacuation if combat fighting spreads into the capital.

Fighting 25 kilometres north of Kabul has concentrated on frontlines near the heavily mined Shamali Plains which leads directly to the Panjsher Valley, the fortified bastion of opposition commander, Ahmad Shah Masood.

The Panjsher remains a prime target

for the Taliban — which now controls 80 percent of the country — and is seeking to oust Masood and the opposition Northern Alliance from Afghanistan's northeast provinces. 'Although it remains unlikely, there is a fear this could spread into Kabul,' a senior western diplomat based in Islamabad said.

## Taliban release 200 prisoners

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia Wednesday released 200 opposition prisoners in a surprise move coinciding with its major offensive against forces of the rival northern alliance.

Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar ordered the release in a special decree issued in Kandahar, the hardline militia's headquarters in southern Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Quoting a Taliban spokesman, Abdul Haye Mutmaen, the agency said the prisoners, who came from the opposition-held northern Afghan provinces, were freed from Kandahar's Surpoza jail.

They were captured in previous battles between the Islamic militia and forces of the northern alliance, led by the militia's main foe Ahmad Shah Masood, he said. Mutmaen said the 'unilateral' release was ordered by Omar 'out of sympathy as they are fellow Afghans.'

He said the prisoners were handed over to the international Red Cross which would make arrangements for transporting them back to their hometowns.

NATION

23 JUL 1998

NATION 29 JUL 1999

# Refugees

One of the most tragic byproducts of war, political oppression and economic instability, is the refugee. The number of political refugees, victims of ethnic conflict and civil strife in the world, grew from eight million towards the end of the 1970s to about 20 million during the early 1990s. These are people who have crossed international borders. Each day an estimated 10,000 people in various parts of the world are forced to flee from their countries. On the basis of these statistics, it is estimated that one out of every 130 persons on the face of the earth has been forced to leave their permanent place of residence. Another 26 million people are known to be displaced but are not registered as refugees since they have not crossed international borders but have been forced to leave their permanent homes.

During just four months, April-July 1994, about 3.5 million people, half the total population of Rwanda, were either killed, maimed or forced to flee their homes in search of safety. In November 1996, hundreds of thousands fled refugee camps in Zaire, where they had been living for over two years, after violent incidents and local rebellion. Satellite monitoring of the region showed that hundreds of thousands were scattered in the jungles neighbouring Zaire. The reluctance of the local leadership to accept international intervention within national borders deprives displaced persons of protection. When Rwandan refugees suddenly left camps in Zaire for home, Rwanda said a military mission was no longer needed and the funds should be used for humanitarian assistance. Yet rival groups within the refugee population continued to massacre each other.

In 1998-1999, an estimated one million Kosovar Albanians displaced by ethnic cleansing joined the ranks of refugees. The thoroughness of this ethnic cleansing is borne out by the 390 mass burial sites that have been identified. Of these, 69 sites have been confirmed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Individual killings that have been reported are far too numerous to verify or track. Even Russia, which supported Serbia in the immediate past, has not "chosen to publicly encourage sanctuary for Yugoslav President Milosevic on Russian territory." It is now believed that the Serbian leadership may have been pursuing its scorched earth/ethnic cleansing policy in an effort to keep at least the industrialised north of the province an integral part of Serbia.

After the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, this was the third major population displacement crisis to erupt in the region. By 1995, 1.3 million people had been displaced by war in Bosnia. Only 80,000 were able to return to their homes after the Dayton Accord. The state of affairs in Croatia was not much better for the Serbs: an estimated 80,000-200,000 of them left Krajina. While 50,000 returned to Croatia, they did not go back to their homes in Krajina for fear of hostility. The rate of return to the UN protectorate of Eastern Slavonija, where heavily armed UN troops keep the peace, has been higher, about 45 per cent. The streams of Kosovar refugees that preceded the entry of NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo are evidence that people will return to their homes as soon

## Shahwar Junaid

as possible once their security is guaranteed.

A further incentive for refugees to return home and reconstruct has been emergency assistance and promise of help through the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe. This multi-national, multi-agency pact was approved in Cologne by the G-8 Foreign Ministers on June 8, 1999. This commits the G-8 countries to work towards integrating the region into the mainstream of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance, thereby decreasing the possibility of future regional conflict. The aim of the pact is to promote and strengthen democratic and civil institutions, observance of human rights, market economies and regional defence cooperation. A regional committee, with representatives from all parties, will undertake work through three working groups. This will supplement the work of regional initiatives that are already in place. These include the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Southeast Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Council. Resources are expected to come from European nations and international financial institutions and will be supplemented with US funds.

Where people have been brutally displaced, economic assistance and the reconstruction of infrastructure as well as civil institutions prevents recurring migration in search of greener pastures. About 35 million people have emigrated, and continue to emigrate, at the rate of about a million a year, from less developed countries to the prosperous industrialised countries, and the newly industrialised countries. These people are sometimes called "economic refugees". While many come from territories that have seen conflict, others are trying to escape stagnant and depressed economies. In most countries these economic refugees do not qualify for assistance since they are fleeing a condition that is not considered life-threatening and is unlikely to be eased in the foreseeable future - poverty.

The traditional focus of the activities of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) continues to be on securing the right of refugees to asylum. The agency acknowledges, however, that the countries that were, traditionally, proud to grant asylum to those seeking refuge from persecution are now less keen to do so. Many of these countries say that they want to guard their frontiers from what they perceive to be "economic" rather than political refugees and have passed legislation to plug loopholes that allowed such refugees in. A number of countries are of the view that it is becoming more difficult to differentiate between those under political attack, those who are the victims of injustice, and those who are merely subject to generally prevalent social and economic distress. The latter, according to the books, do not merit asylum.

While insisting on the right to asylum of all those in danger, UNHCR is now also involved in trying to protect internally displaced people by seeking to remove, through negotiations with national governments, the causes of their displacement. These negotiations include efforts to pressurise national governments to enforce human rights within their

borders and to take the responsibility for maintaining law and order where groups of the population are pitted against each other. This strategy aims to contain displaced people within their country of origin in an effort to prevent them from becoming refugees in the technical sense of the word. Those deprived of opportunities for gainful employment and social support within their own countries for political, ethnic or reasons other than lack of competence, often become non-persons for the state. They virtually cease to exist as members of society. The international community appears to believe that the level of distress in such situations is bearable in those countries where electoral democracy exists.

In 1993-94, the policy of containment of displaced persons within national boundaries caused confusion and dismay amongst thousands of Afghans who had previously just walked across to safety in Pakistan whenever fighting erupted. Safe areas were designated within Afghanistan. UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began operating inside Afghan territory. Since then fewer people have been permitted to cross the border during outbreaks of hostility between rival groups in Afghanistan.

The majority of Afghans displaced during the war of the 1980s and subsequent internecine conflict, are still languishing in camps or wandering around South Asia. Assistance has more or less dried up. UN appeals for assistance for those displaced by the Afghan war receive an average five per cent response.

Pakistan is no stranger to the kinds of crises and political upheavals that produce refugees. Long before the Martial Law of 1977 which led to the flight of hundreds to foreign countries, there was the East Pakistan crisis which resulted in the death of thousands, the flight of many more to India. What began, in the 1950s, as a movement in East Pakistan to protect a unique cultural heritage in the face of a changing political milieu, was transformed by insensitivity into a full scale insurgency. This insurgency was supported not just by India, using the refugees as an excuse, but by most Western capitals. A review of events will reveal that there was an ethnic basis for the movement that led to the disintegration of a united Pakistan. The Biharis, who insist they are Pakistanis, are not accepted by the Bangladeshis and whose second generation is growing up in refugee camps in Bangladesh, are evidence of the ethnic basis of the creation of Bangladesh. These Biharis are a blot on the conscience of Pakistan, Bangladesh and those countries that saw that particular crisis to its logical conclusion and then filed it away.

Refugees created by the Kashmir dispute are not just well integrated in Pakistan but are privileged to have an entire nation agitating on their behalf for their right of self-determination. India and Pakistan need to consider a legal solution of the Kashmir dispute with the cooperation of the community of nations. There has to be a stop loss order on this dispute which has bled the economies of both countries. Documents regarding the basis for the Partition of the Subcontinent are available to both nations and should make the task easier.

NATION

12 JUL 1993

## 185 Afghan families return home

QUETTA (NNI) - At least 185 Afghan refugee families voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan with the cooperation of the UNHCR from Karachi and other cities of Sindh via Quetta.

They belonged to Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Helmand and Kunduz. Their return home through Quetta and Chaman was facilitated by the UNHCR. The returning families included women and children as well.

The UNHCR distributed books and other gifts among the Afghan children in Quetta. UNHCR would provide Rs 5000 and 300 kg wheat to every Afghan family on their arrival at Kandahar.

They said that peace has now returned to their country and they want to reconstruct their motherland. They said that in the contrary, law and order situation in Pakistan is deteriorating and economy of the country has also been in bad shape. They said that they cannot manage their livelihood in Pakistan and have decided to go back as situation in Afghanistan is comparatively better.

Most of the returning Afghans were poor and their children were not receiving education in Pakistan. They said there are possibilities of education for their male children in Afghanistan. They said that the prime concern is law and order situation and Taliban, they added, have now restored peace and tranquility in Afghanistan. They said they would face no problems and would rather be able to look after their children in a proper manner.

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DAWN

13 JUL 1993

## Afghan DPs

By Our Staff Correspondent

QUETTA, July 9: The United Nations restarted repatriation of Afghan refugees from Karachi, after a break of around three months, on Friday.

A convoy of 33 trucks, carrying 185 families of the refugees, arrived here from Karachi and

later crossed into Afghanistan at Chaman, UNHCR sources said.

In the first phase of the repatriation in April last, 250 families were sent back home from Karachi.

Earlier, UNHCR representatives distributed peace packs among the children aged 6 to 11 years.

DAWN

10 JUL 1993

# Tripartite moot on Afghan DPs repatriation on 30th

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, July 16: A tripartite conference on repatriation of Afghan refugees from NWFP to their homeland is scheduled to be held at Peshawar on 30th.

To be presided by chief minister Sardar Mahtab Ahmad Khan, the conference will be attended by the representatives of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and Afghanistan's Taliban administration. The Government of Pakistan will be represented by the Commissioner, Afghan Refugees and other officers nominated by the provincial and federal governments.

Disclosing this to Dawn, Afghan Refugees Commissioner in Peshawar, Gulzar Khan, said that the conference would take into account the refugees' question in a broader perspective from different angles including matters relating to their repatriation or their shifting from urban and rural areas, where they were concentrated in large number, to already established camps. "The UNHCR which had been without funds has since received couple of million US dollars to be spent on repatriation of those desirous of returning to their homeland," he said.

The commissioner admitted that law and order situation was not conducive for refugees due to mounting resentment among the local population whose resources had already been over-stretched and strained under DPs pressure. This was creating a wedge between the locals and the DPs, he said. Currently there are about 1.5 million refugees in NWFP alone.

He also referred to a high-level meeting held in Islamabad early this month in which consensus decisions were taken to expedite repatriation of refugees. These now awaited implementation with the formal approval of the provincial government, the commissioner informed.

Explaining the repatriation methodology, the commissioner said that the UNHCR preferred group repatriation instead of funding return of individuals. "This experiment has been successful in

Frontier in the past; and lately in Karachi from large number of Afghan families were shifted to Kandahar via the Balochistan route," he said.

The Islamabad tripartite meeting selected 1,000 refugee families for repatriation and modalities of the operation would be worked out at the Peshawar meeting which the chief minister had been requested to preside, he said.

Meanwhile, a number of DPs had volunteered to shift to camps where appropriate sustenance and other facilities such as schooling and sanitation would be arranged. Such families consisted of about 2000 DPs, he said.

Gulzar Khan expressed satisfaction on the response of UNHCR officials and representatives of the Afghan administration. He said while the former would be happy to do the necessary funding, the latter had agreed to take its citizens back, return their abandoned properties and settle them in their former habitats with international assistance.

He insisted that the repatriation had to be orderly without creating problems either for the returning DPs or the Pakistan and Afghan administrations. Every step would, therefore, have to be taken with great care and under a phased programme as directed by the government, he observed.

The chief minister would provide the necessary guideline, the commissioner said.

Asked if the administration would be using force to repatriate the refugees and to send them to camps, Gulzar Khan said neither there was any need of that nor it was likely to happen as all the parties had a collective stance.

The need of repatriation had arisen due to the pressure which had been building up on the local population and the country's resources. Also, the refugees themselves felt that their stay in Pakistan, particularly in the NWFP, had already been over-stretched.

So far, 22 groups have been identified who are ready to return to Afghanistan. Their return can take place within the next 10 days.

## DATELINE PESHAWAR

A. S. Yousufi

# Repatriation of Afghan DPs

OF late a marked improvement has been noticed in the government's policy vis-a-vis repatriation of 1.5 million registered and unregistered Afghan DPs living in NWFP for the last about 20 years. Hopefully the government will accelerate its efforts, in consultation with local experts, the representatives of Afghan DPs in the province, those nominated by Afghanistan's Taliban administration ruling more than three-fourth of that country and numerous UN bodies with the UNHCR on top of them, to send the DPs back to their homeland to enable them to take part in the reconstruction of their war-ravaged country and start a new life after more than two decades of forced or self-enforced banishment for reasons not shrouded in mystery.

Notwithstanding the misfortune that befell them, these people would find that there were better chances to live a respectable life in their homeland than any where else in the world even if it were the prosperous United States and Europe where, forced by circumstances, few have migrated to. Their chances of economic progress would be even brighter because once they make a beginning in all seriousness they will find the support of international community not wanting.

However, the precondition of restoration of peace in the land, guarantee of safety and security of human life and that of basic human rights, both for men and women, will be on the top of the agenda of those wanting to help. All this once ensured, (and there is no reason why it cannot be so done), Afghan nation has foresight and vitality enough to make a socio-economic breakthrough and also attain political invulnerability in not too distant future. Given this, the Afghan nation has the wisdom and prowess to leave behind many a nation who today boast of economic progress and also command political respect.

This is because the nation has learnt a lesson, knows its way to success and has history and tradition behind it.

Hopefully, the July 30 scheduled tripartite moot, to be presided by NWFP Chief Minister Sardar Mahtab at Peshawar, will take important and far-reaching decisions to make the return of DPs more practical, respectable and comfortable than has been the case so far. This can be realised with the active support of Pakistan and financial assistance of the world community which unfortunately turned itself away from the Afghan nation and its miseries once its objective of bleeding the erstwhile Soviet Union to death was achieved through the sacrifices of millions of Afghans. If the two of them even now failed to rehabilitate the people of this devastated land, which fell prey to international conspiracies, history will not forgive them nor would they themselves be able sit in peace for it has now become a small world. The recent events hold testimony to that.

The government of Pakistan should realise that if the stay of DPs is further overstretched it may have grave consequences as it would amount to over-testing the patience of the local population whose resources stand shrunk as a result of government's wayward economic policies, rampant corruption and its miserable failure on the political front. The government sooth sayers have in store nothing but words, promises and pledges with little done for the people. The government functionaries have already played havoc with the economy of this country and more difficult times are ahead of us for no on-ground corrective measures are in sight. It is people's will to live which has kept the nation from being torn apart. To that the government had nothing to contribute nor can one expect much from it in future

unless the system can be fundamentally transformed. This, too, remains a far cry.

In the given circumstances, as these unfortunately interminably exist in Pakistan, one should not be surprised if in time even the people of war ravaged Afghanistan, now trotting the globe, leave Pakistan far behind economically if they work hard and make full use of opportunities that come their way. This has already happened. Look at India, South Korea, Malaysia and so many other East Asian nations. Look at Iran, China and the Central Asian states. All of these, once behind us, are far ahead of us economically and continue making strides while we are least ashamed of living on foreign bread and butter and pledging our resources to foreign masters.

A peaceful and early repatriation of Afghan DPs is all the more necessary lest some thing happens which should embitter our relations with them and leave behind bad memories. If unluckily such a situation arises we shall not be able to retain whatever little good will now exists between us and the Afghan nation. The time is fast running out. Hasty but careful steps should be taken and the international community should be persuaded to fully participate in the return of DPs and rehabilitation of their devastated resources.

It is the prime responsibility especially of the United States which used Afghans for its proxy war with the Soviets and has now turned away from them. Let the UNHCR have sufficient funds to finance the project. Naturally, Pakistan cannot handle the process alone nor does it have financial resources. The 30th July meeting should ponder over all aspects of the problem. And this should be done in all seriousness so that a strategy can be evolved. Such a strategy will brook no loopholes and no delays.

NATION 23 JUL 1983

# Stringent laws hamper Afghans' repatriation

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – Though the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Pakistan and Iranian government are struggling hand in hand to encourage volunteer repatriation of the Afghan refugees, yet lack of livelihood sources and strict laws of Taliban government have hampered the repatriation process.

The UNHCR had already announced a package containing cash amount, wheat bags and plastic sheets, for the refugees.

During a visit to Torkham this correspondent witnessed that a large number of Afghan families are going back to their motherland. The UNHCR volunteers in Torkham told this correspondent that so far they had registered 17 families comprising 110 persons that had returned to Afghanistan, utilising the transportation facilities provided by the UNHCR. Likewise, the families have also received the UNHCR repatriation package, including Rs 5000 cash and 300 kg wheat per family.

It was further learnt that after reaching the UNHCR repatriation station at Jalalabad, these families with the collaboration of Taliban authorities are being despatched to their home villages and towns in the vehicles, arranged

free of cost for them by all of the concerned quarters.

Besides the UNHCR, a number of other NGO's are also contributing to repatriation of the refugees in their homes and towns.

But almost all these projects are concentrated in some particular provinces, where either Taliban didn't face any resistance or have been succeeded in establishment of their complete rule.

The UNHCR authorities had earlier said that by the end of June, number of returning refugees in current summer was above 51,000. A recent UN weekly update states that in the last one week some 400 families, comprising 2183 persons had returned from both NWFP and Balochistan to NWFP. Apart from such a great number of the repatriating refugees from both the provinces, 100 families had only returned to Khushi district of Logar province. Besides the UN reports, the personnel of secret agencies, stationed at Torkham have claimed that number of returning refugees was more than 5,000 in June.

There are conflicting views of various functionaries that the Afghans themselves are yet to get surety about complete peace and harmony in their motherland. An Afghan refugee who was entering Pakistan, said that although he had shifted his family mem-

bers to inside Afghanistan, it is impossible for them to survive there. Elaborating his point of view, he said that except Agriculture field or smuggling food items from Pakistan, there is nothing to do inside Afghanistan.

The Afghans are also facing difficulties to adjust themselves.

The personnel of secret agencies and Pakistani traders have informed that foreign assistance and aid had made greedy these people. After getting the UNHCR repatriation package, these families are again entering Pakistan. He added that they had made it a business or a source of livelihood. But the Afghan traders have disagreed with this perception and added that unless complete peace it could be impossible either for UNHCR or for Pakistan to get 100 per cent repatriation of the refugees.

Besides lack of employment opportunities and basic facilities of life, the renewed US threats of firing cruise missiles against the Arab militant Osama Bin Laden is also another hurdle in repatriation of the refugees. On the border, the transporters and drivers, arriving from various parts of Afghanistan particularly from Jalalabad, say that Afghans are expecting another round of air-strikes by the United States in the near future, therefore majority of the civilians is to move to safer places.

NATION 8 JUL 1990

# UN to arrange workshop on bee-keeping for Afghans

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - The Food Agriculture Organisation of UNO will begin a two-week course for Afghan beekeepers and extension workers in Islamabad with a view to make beekeeping more effective sector, states a UNDP statement issued here on Friday.

The course will demonstrate how to use equipment that can be made within Afghanistan. It will also teach participants how to make a range of products using honey and beeswax. In the

long term, such training will help Afghan beekeepers to develop a self-sufficient industry.

A good source of both food and income, beekeeping can be done in cultivated areas as well those that are out of cultivation, such as mined areas.

It also ensure that crops are pollinated. Beekeeping is possible for people of any age and either gender. It is particularly valuable for Afghan women because bees can be kept near to home and attended to when time allows.

It states that 30 women and men will

attend the course, including commercial Afghan beekeepers who move their bees throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, Afghan refugees and personnel of the NGO's and UN agencies. The training course will take place at the NARC Honeybee Research Institute Islamabad. It is being funded by DFID and organised by FAO and the NARC Honeybee Research Institute. Dr Nasreen Muzafar, Director of the Institute, will join with FAO Consultants Dr Nicol Bradbear from UK and Dr Henrik Hansen from Denmark.

Rival forces continue fighting in Samangan

## Brahimi in Kabul to pursue peace efforts

KABUL (AFP) - UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi is in Kabul to further a shaky peace process initiated this week with talks between the Taliban and its opponents in Uzbekistan, official sources said Thursday.

Brahimi, who arrived in the Afghan capital late Wednesday, will meet Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, head of the Taliban ruling council here, sources said.

Brahimi is in Kabul to keep up the momentum toward peace following the Tashkent talks and try to prevent a possible major summer offensive by the Taliban against the opposition Northern Alliance, sources said.

The UN envoy is expected to stay in Afghanistan until Sunday and he may also visit the southern Kandahar headquarters of the Taliban for a meeting with the Islamic militia's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar, they added.

During their meeting in Uzbekistan the representatives of the warring sides agreed to hold further discussions in future on a ceasefire, prisoner swaps and fresh peace negotiations after approval by their leaders.

The Tashkent talks were held within a UN-sponsored group of eight countries, which has been trying to bring about a negotiated settlement of the conflict through establishment of a broad-based Afghan government.

Meanwhile, Heavy fighting continued Thursday between the ruling Taliban militia and opposition northern alliance troops for the control of a pass in northern Samangan province, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The rival forces, using heavy artillery, were engaged in fierce fighting for Husaini pass, part of which is in the opposition's hands, it said.

The Pakistan based private news service quoted Taliban officials as saying that Thursday's fighting claimed three lives on both sides. It gave no details.

AIP said the Taliban had earlier pushed back opposition forces from Darr-e-Sauf district in Samangan province. 'We have forced the opposition troops to retreat into the mountains' on the western side of Darr-i-Sauf, AIP quoted a Taliban official as saying.

Around a dozen fighters from both sides were killed in Wednesday's fighting in Samangan where the rival forces have continually clashed over the past few months.

The opposition, which controls several provinces in northern Afghanistan, earlier claimed to have beaten back several Taliban attacks in the area.

The fighting did not cease despite Tuesday's agreement between Taliban and opposition officials in Tashkent to discuss a ceasefire, prisoner swap and dates for a fresh round of peace negotiations with their leaders.

## UN, US concerned over killing of Afghan leader

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Secretary General of United Nations Kofi Annan has expressed deep concern over the assassination of Afghan leader Abdul Ahad Karzai.

In a statement faxed to this office on Friday he said that he was concerned about the repeated attempts on the lives of exiled Afghan leaders in Pakistan.

He appealed to the Pakistani authorities to do their utmost to investigate Karzai death and ensure safety of Afghans residing in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, according to a USIS report, the State Department has also condemned the killing of Afghan leader. The text of the statement reads:

"We deplore the tragic killing of Afghan tribal leader and former Senator Abdul Ahad Karzai on July 14 in Quetta, Pakistan. His killers have not been identified. Mr Karzai was the distinguished leader of the Populzai tribe and a major vice for moderation among the Pushtun tribes. He played a significant role in the fight against the Soviet occupation of his country. In recent years, Mr. Karzai was active in trying to find peace in Afghanistan. Our sympathies go out to his family and friends."

NATION

17 JUL 1990

NATION

23 JUL 1990

# UN predicts severe food shortage in Afghanistan

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD – The UN predicts a precarious food shortage of 1.13 million tons in 2000 due to poor production of crops due to erratic rains.

Mike Sackett of the World Food Programme (WFP) and Bary Stride of the Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO) told the weekly press briefing at the UN Information Center that the shortage is one of the severest in recent years.

A field study by the WFP-FAO showed that wheat production fell both in irrigated and rain-fed areas because Afghanistan experienced dry conditions this year, with snowfall being the lowest in 40 years.

Yields were good in the Eastern and southwestern regions due to sufficient water availability while in the Central Northern and Southern regions reduced availability of irrigation waters has diminished yields.

Low rainfalls in Eastern and Southern region and yellow rust and pest damage in northern region were said to be the main reasons for the fall in wheat production.

Mike Sackett said Afghan traders were expected to import 800,000 tons of wheat, while the WFP planned to supply 206,000 tons to meet the shortage.

The WFP has 97,000 in the pipeline for 1999 and would require 45 million dollars in donations to arrange the remaining 109,000 tons. Its emergency food aid targets about 1.2 million Afghans.

Some 85 percent of the country's estimated 21 million people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Only about 12 percent of the country's total land are arable, with 3 percent under forest cover, 46 percent permanent pastures, while the rest (39 percent) is mountainous. About half of the cultivable area is irrigated while the other half is arid of rain-fed.

For 1999 the harvested area for irrigated wheat is expected to be reduced by, about 3 percent compared to 1998, largely due to an increase in cash crops (onion, potato, poppy and tree crops such as almonds and apricots) and dryland wheat plantings, which largely failed. This year's irrigated wheat har-

vest is expected to yield 1.99 million tones as compared to 2.02 million tones in 1998, a decrease of 1.5 percent.

Low rainfall has caused the failure of the rain-fed wheat crop in the Eastern and Southern regions. Reduced rainfall, yellow rust and other pest damage have reduced potential yields in the northern region. This year's wheat rain-fed harvest is expected to yield 512,000 tones, a reduction of 37 percent compared to last year's total of 814,000 tones. Overall, there is expected to be a reduction of 11.8% for all wheat crops and a 16% reduction for all cereal crops.

Wheat is the main food crop, accounting for more than three-quarters of food grain production. Since 1995 the agricultural section in Afghanistan has been steadily registering an appreciable recovery.

The FAO Crops Project provides improved seed to farmers and the FAO/WFP Food for Seed Programme assists in preserving some improved seed for planning in later years. The UN demining programme has served to increase the agricultural land available for planting.

## UN Council calls for immediate talks

By Our Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, July 29: Saying that it was gravely concerned at the reports of a major assault by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday called on the warring Afghan factions to enter into negotiations immediately to find a political settlement.

In a press statement, the council members voiced concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation which, they said, could undermine the international community's efforts to bring about a speedy end to the armed conflict in Afghanistan. They called for an immediate end to outside military support for all factions.

The council members also expressed support for the peace-making efforts by Secretary-

General Kofi Annan and his special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi and said the recent meeting of the "six-plus-two" group in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, was an important step towards a political settlement of the Afghan problem.

Afghanistan's warring parties, the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, attended the meeting of the group, which consists of the Russian Federation, the United States and Afghanistan's six neighbours: China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Meanwhile, UN agencies operating in Afghanistan said on Thursday they were extremely concerned at the disruption of humanitarian activities by the rocketing of Kabul airport on Tuesday.

## UN-sponsored moot on Afghan crisis begins today

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – The UN-sponsored conference of the "six-plus-two" group begins in Tashkent today to discuss ways for peaceful solution to the long-stand Afghan imbroglio.

Deputy foreign ministers from Afghanistan's neighboring countries, the United States and Russia will attend the two-day conference. Pakistan will be represented by envoy on Afghanistan Iftikhar and Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan Aziz Khan. Representatives of the ruling Taliban and the Opposition northern alliance will also participate in the moot.

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19 JUL 1999

# Brahimi returning to New York after failure of mission

By Hasan Akhtar

ISLAMABAD, July 29: As the 11-year-old intra-Afghan ethnic war assumes ferocity once again in the northern part of Afghanistan, the UN Secretary General's special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, who has been in the region for the last about 10 days, is returning on Friday to New York, giving an obvious signal of yet another failure of his mission in the strife-torn country.

There was no official announcement about the arrival and engagements of Brahimi. He, however, reportedly sent his last report on the current fighting and situation in Afghanistan to Secretary General Kofi Annan on Thursday evening on the dismal situation in that country.

While the belligerents taking advantage of the warm months have once again started exchanging major attacks against each other, millions of people in the towns and countryside remained unfed and shelterless as in the past ten years or so.

The opposing sides in the country, which has seen no peace for the last 21 years, had been engaged in preparing for fresh rounds of gruesome fighting while Brahimi after yet another meeting of the Six plus Two contact group on Afghanistan failed to achieve any thing substantial except making another futile appeal to Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan to stop military and other material support to the warring factions.

Brahimi, who also made his last ditch effort last week in Kabul to set up bridges between Taliban and their non-Pushtoon multi-ethnic adversaries, led mainly by Ahmad Shah Masoud, could not prevent flare up of another round of grim

fighting and carnage in northern Afghanistan where the Afghan minorities are confined, attempting to ward off complete take over of Afghanistan, 80 to 90 per cent of which is already governed by the Taliban militia.

Brahimi, who is about to complete two years as UN special envoy, in his unsuccessful quest to restore peace in Afghanistan, with a view to paving the way for a durable multi-party government, arrived in Islamabad earlier this week from Kabul, just before Kabul airport was closed as a result of the air and ground shelling by anti-Taliban forces to all air traffic including the UN and international aid flights.

Mr Brahimi remained inaccessible to this correspondent throughout the day one on one pretext or the other. No information was available as to his engagements in Islamabad except that, according to informed sources, he had held extensive discussions with the Pakistan government officials and some important diplomats on the latest developments in Afghanistan.

While the dominant view in official and diplomatic circles in Islamabad is that the Taliban, who launched the offensive this week against Ahmed Shah Masoud, were close to achieving total control of Afghanistan, the UN envoy and the Western diplomats assert that even after the capitulation of the present opposition, Afghanistan would not be able to regain stability and peace which would stand in the way of its reconstruction and development.

The neighbouring Central Asian states are expected to serve as bases for incursions.

## Foreigners in Afghan war termed 'dangerous'

ISLAMABAD, July 30: The UN envoy for Afghanistan said on Friday that the Taliban's use of Pakistani and Arab Moslem militants to fight in a civil war could rebound on their countries of origin when they went home.

"This is extremely dangerous," Lakhdar Brahimi said of reports that thousands of Pakistani nationals, several hundred Arabs and an unknown number of Central Asian volunteers were fighting alongside the Taliban against its opposition.

"These thousands of young people are not fighting a foreign invading force as it was when the Russians were there. They are taking sides in a local conflict," he told Reuters in an interview.

"They call it a Jihad. Nobody else does. I think Pakistan, Arab countries and any Central Asian countries with nationals fighting there should ask themselves what are these young people going to do when they come home," said Brahimi.

He said he raised the issue with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in talks on Thursday. "He also expressed concern about the situation of a large number of Pakistani nationals in a conflict in a neighbouring country," Brahimi said.

Many of the militants are said by Western diplomats to have links with Mujahideen groups fighting Indian occupation of Kashmir who were told to vacate heights occupied by them.

The Kashmiri freedom fighters have denounced the pullout accord and joined in demonstrations by religious political parties against the agreement and vowed to fight on in Kashmir.

Brahimi said the use of many militants groups were avowedly anti-American or had foreign targets.

"Oh yes, definitely...at least some of the individuals involved in these programmes of volunteers...from their own statements have agendas elsewhere," he said.

Brahimi said the Taliban's launching of a major offensive this week against its last potent foe, Ahmad Shah Masood, represented a snub to the international community which had appealed for peace talks to end 20 years of conflict.

Afghanistan's neighbouring states in a so-called six plus two contact group met in Tashkent last week and issued a statement saying they would not arm the factions.

But there is concern among Western states that some of the neighbours — Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and China — will not match words with deeds.

"We are demanding that change, we are asking them to live up to that signature," Brahimi said.

"Not a fly can go into Afghanistan without going through the land or airspace of one or many of these countries," he said.

The Taliban accuse Iran of arming Masood and other opposition supplying the Taliban.

Islamabad is one of only three states which recognise the Taliban while Iran backs the government the movement toppled.

"Planes need jet fuel otherwise they are grounded the next day. These jeeps and four wheel drives all need petrol. If fuel was not available they would stop the next day," Brahimi said. —Reuters

## Afghanistan may face famine

ISLAMABAD, July 23: The United Nations on Friday predicted a food shortage of 1.13 million tons in 2000 in the war-shattered Afghanistan because of poor quality cereal crops this year.

Mike Sackett of the World Food Programme (WFP) and Bary Stride of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) told weekly press briefing at the UN Information Centre here that the shortage is largest in several years.

A field study by the WFP-FAO showed that wheat production fell both in irrigated and rain-fed areas because Afghanistan experienced dry conditions this year, with snowfall being the lowest in 40 years.

Yields were good in the eastern and southwestern regions due to sufficient water availability while in the central, northern and southern regions reduced availability of irrigation waters has diminished yields.

Mike Sackett said Afghan traders were expected to import 800,000 tons of wheat while the WFP planned to supply 206,000 tons to meet the shortage. The WFP has 97,000 in the pipeline for 1999 and would require 45 million dollars in donations to arrange the remaining 109,000 tons. Its emergency food aid targets about 1.2 million Afghans.

The FAO's Bary Strides said the opium crop takes the best-irrigated lands in Afghanistan. The UN experts believe that poppy was grown on a larger area than 63,000 hectares in 1998.

Some 85 per cent of the country's estimated 21 million people

depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Only about 12 per cent of the country's total land are arable, with 3 per cent under forest cover, 46 per cent permanent pastures, while the rest (39 per cent) is mountainous. About half of the cultivable area is irrigated while the other half is arid or rain-fed.

For 1999 the harvested area for irrigated wheat is expected to be reduced by about 3 per cent compared to 1998, largely due to an increase in cash crops (onion, potato, poppy and tree crops such as almonds and apricots) and dry-land wheat plantings, which largely failed.

This year's irrigated wheat harvest is expected to yield 1.99 million tons as compared to 2.02 million tons in 1998, a decrease of 1.5 per cent.

Low rainfall has caused the failure of the rain-fed wheat crop in the eastern and southern regions. Reduced rainfall, yellow rust and other pest damage have reduced potential yields in the northern region.

This year's wheat rain-fed harvest is expected to yield 5,12,000 tons, a reduction of 37 per cent compared to last year's total of 8,14,000 tons.

Overall, there is expected to be a reduction of 11.8 per cent for all wheat crops and a 16 per cent reduction for all cereal crops.

Sackett said the WFP and its partners in Afghanistan will keep the situation under continuous review and will appeal for additional resources should they be needed.—NNI

# US imposes sanctions against Taliban govt

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton has imposed financial sanctions against the Taliban religious militia that rules Afghanistan in retaliation for its reputed support of Osama bin Laden, the alleged international terrorist.

Clinton signed an executive order Monday imposing the sanctions. Bin Laden was placed on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List" last month with a \$5 million reward offered for information leading to his arrest.

"To this day, bin Laden and his network continue to plan new attacks against Americans without regard for the innocence of their intended victims or for those non-Americans who might get in the way of his attack," Clinton said in a written statement.

He said his executive order "will deepen the international isolation of the Taliban, limit its ability to support terrorist networks and demonstrate the need to conform to the accepted norms of international behavior."

In practical terms, the impact of the sanctions probably will be modest, a senior administration official acknowledged, speaking on condition of anonymity. It is not clear what assets might be affected, the official said, but declared that the action sends a clear mes-

sage that the United States will not tolerate those who shelter international terrorists.

U.S. trade with Afghanistan totaled \$24 million in 1998. United States has sanctions in effect covering more than two dozen countries, from Angola to Zambia, accounting for half of the world's population.

The order freezes any property of the Taliban within U.S. jurisdiction. It also prohibits transactions and trade with the Taliban or in territory controlled by the Taliban, preventing any U.S. investment.

The United States demands that the Taliban expel bin Laden to the United States for trial or to a third country where he would face justice for alleged crimes.

The Clinton administration accuses bin Laden of masterminding the Aug. 7, 1998, bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed more than 200 people and injured thousands.

Washington says bin Laden is still hiding in Afghanistan. Others suggest he is on his way elsewhere — Somalia, Chechnya, even Iraq — preferably somewhere gripped by anarchy and rife with anti-U.S. sentiment.

Taliban leaders have insisted they do not know where he is.

## Cohen changes travel plan because of bin Laden: report

WASHINGTON, July 17: US Secretary of Defence William Cohen abruptly cancelled a trip to Albania this week after US officials determined that supporters of Saudi-born bombing suspect Osama bin Laden were looking to strike a "high-profile target," ABC News reported on Friday.

The network said that Cohen was not believed to be a target but scrapped the travel plans on the advice of Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO's supreme commander.

ABC said that American intelligence officials have received reports in recent weeks that indicate bin Laden's operatives may plan to use Albania as "the staging area for an attack" against a "target of opportunity."

Last month, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright avoided Albania in part because of the presence there of bin Laden's supporters, ABC said.

Pentagon spokesman Lt Col Steve Campbell told Reuters that the main reason Cohen changed his travel plans was that there are only about 600 US troops in Albania, compared to 6,000 in Bosnia.

"The primary reason was to visit as many troops as possible," said Campbell.

Security concerns, however, were "a secondary reason" for the change, Campbell acknowledged.

"We're not going to discuss those concerns ... but security is always an issue whenever a senior individual travels," he said.

Bin Laden, suspected of coordinating the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on Aug. 7, 1998, is on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of 10 Most Wanted fugitives. At least 226 people died in the two blasts. — Reuters

NATION 07 JUL 1999

# US imposes sanctions against Taliban

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, July 6: The White House on Tuesday announced sanctions against the Taliban for continuing to harbour Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, it was officially announced.

President Clinton issued an executive order blocking all property and interests of Taliban and its leaders in the US, senior administration officials said at a special briefing at the State Department on the subject.

This does not mean designating Taliban as a terrorist group or

declaring Afghanistan as a terrorist state, the officials clarified.

The order, issued under President's International Emergency Economic Powers Act, prohibits any transactions and dealings by US persons in property or interests blocked by the order, including making or receiving any contributions, funds, goods and services.

The amount blocked will likely to be modest but the US wants to send a strong message. The order does not prohibit travel.

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09 JUL 1999

# Washington accuses UAE, Qatar of aiding Osama

From Humayun Akhtar

WASHINGTON—After imposing sanctions against Taliban the US officials say they believe that two suspected terrorists wanted by the FBI have received help through two Persian Gulf countries with close ties to Washington, complicating the administration's counterterrorism efforts.

According to a *The New York Times* report, although the US administration has made no public protests, it quietly sent senior officials last week to one of the countries, the United Arab Emirates, to lobby for a halt to a suspected financial relationship between a government controlled bank and Osama bin Laden.

The paper reports that "the Central Intelligence Agency has obtained evidence that bin Laden has been allowed to funnel money through the Dubai Islamic Bank in Dubai, which the United Arab Emirates government effectively controls."

The US administration is also confronting allegations by some American officials that the foreign minister of Qatar told a suspected lieutenant of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, a convicted terrorist, Khaled Shaikh Muhammad that an FBI counterterrorism team was on its way to Qatar to arrest him. The United States wanted him in connection with a plot to blow up 12 American airliners over the Pacific.

Both cases highlight the difficulties of managing relations with moderate Arab states long courted by Washington, showered with aid and allowed to buy high technology military weapons, comments *The NY Times*.

According to the paper, "The American generosity is meant to encourage the moderate states to stand as a bulwark against radical Islam, with public

policies and with quiet support for American intelligence operations. But analysts say some members of the elite even in moderate Arab states apparently feel a need to hedge their bets against critics of their pro-Western policies and to insure against becoming targets of terrorist attacks themselves."

According to the paper, the US official blame wealthy "Sunni Arabs" in the Persian Gulf for quietly sharing Osama bin Laden's anti-Western fundamentalist beliefs, even though they run counter to other moderate Arab interests.

US intelligence officials said they had evidence that bin Laden had a relationship with the bank, which they believed had been arranged with the approval of the officials who control the bank. The minister of state for finance and industry for the emirates, Mohammed Khalfan bin Kharbush, was elected chairman of the bank in February, after the government stepped in to prop it up in the wake of severe financial losses last year that followed charges of embezzlement.

A senior US official who went to the Emirates last week said that officials were "responsive" to American concerns about the Dubai bank's involvement with Osama bin Laden. But the official refused to provide details about the meetings, which included Treasury Department and National Security Council officials. The American officials also declined to say how much money they believed that Osama bin Laden had funneled through the bank.

Estimates of Osama bin Laden's wealth vary widely. Some analysts say they are convinced that he has just a few million dollars left from his vast inheritance. The Central Intelligence

Agency estimates that he has up to \$250 million, including assets in legitimate businesses.

A press adviser in the Emirates Embassy here, Edmund Ghareeb, said he could not comment on the suspected bank dealings. The Qatar ambassador to the United States, Saad Mohammed al-Kobasi, declined to comment on the allegations against officials in his country.

For years, the main port of call for US warships in the gulf was in the Emirates. Last year, the country agreed to pay \$8 billion for F-16 fighters; a major boost for Lockheed Martin. In Qatar, construction is under way on what United States officials say will be the Pentagon's largest prepositioning supply base outside the United States. When the \$178 million complex is completed in about a year, it will support up to 10,000 troops and 5,000 vehicles, aiding operations against Iraq.

Since the Gulf War, Qatar has also deepened its economic ties, cutting deals with American oil companies like Occidental Petroleum and Mobil. Breaking with its larger neighbor, Saudi Arabia, Qatar also became the first gulf state to establish open trade relations with Israel.

Its foreign minister, Sheik Hamed bin Jasim al Thani, plays a significant role in the relationship with Washington. He has met Secretary of State Madeleine Albright two times, in November and February, officials said.

The Qatar case centers on efforts to arrest Khaled in connection with Yousef's plot to destroy the airliners. Ramzi Yousef was convicted in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. In January 1996, the United States secretly indicted Khaled as an accomplice in the airliner plot.

## Zahir Shah plan to solve Afghan issue for good

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** — Prof. Rasool Amin known intellectual from Afghanistan and chief of the Afghan Education and Research Council in Peshawar has said that former king Mohammad Zahir Shah has initiated a practical struggle to find out an amicable solution to the conflict.

The ex-King has constituted a 15-member Advisory Board which would held detailed deliberations in Rome, Italy, Prof. Amin remarked while talking to newsmen in his office on Friday afternoon.

Prof. Amin has recently returned from Rome after attending the meeting. Besides Prof. Amin the meeting was also attended by 14 others.

Prof. Rasool Amin reminded that after inaugurating the Advisory Board meeting, former King Mohammad Zahir Shah had told the participants to pinpoint internal and external problems of Afghanistan. He further asked the participants to highlight his role in resolving the core issues.

Similarly, former king had also stressed to discuss ways and means for ensuring Afghanistan's friendly and neighbourly relations with those countries who had extended help to them and have contributed towards jihad.

He further said that former king has also declared that Afghanistan is their home and all of them are bound to devise ways and means for lasting peace there.

Prof. Amin said that Afghan issue now had become an international issue and besides Afghans the regional and international community wanted peace.

Prof. Rasool Amin further explained that 22-year happenings in Afghanistan had proved that no one can govern Afghanistan through force and military ways. He viewed that the Afghans may be given a chance to decide about the future of their motherland on their own.

Prof. Rasool Amin confirmed that in favour of his efforts former king Mohammad Zahir Shah is in contacts not only with the peace-loving neutral Afghans but even with Taliban, Northern Alliance, Pakistan and Iran.

He said that only through such steps, the long awaited conflict could be resolved and the war-affected people could return to their homes.

Prof. Rasool Amin said since a long all of the UN teams had focused efforts on negotiations and no one took practical steps.

NATION

10 JUL 1999

## Afghan team to leave Peshawar for Cyprus on 5th

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** — An 11-member delegation comprising leading Afghan elders, intellectuals and politicians would leave Peshawar for Cyprus on Monday to attend a three-day conference on Afghanistan.

Those who would attend the scheduled seminar from Peshawar included moderate Afghan leader Syed Ishaq Gillani, Rahimullah Mujaddadi and Humayoon Shinwari of the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF), Humayoon Jareer and Abdul Hadi Argandawal of Hizbe Islami, Dr Mohammad Javed of Hizbe Wahdat, Dr Rahim Pukhtoonar, Dr Fazili, Engineer Ehsan Mayar, Abdul Haq Shafaq and Azizullah Shafaq.

Besides the moderate and neutral Afghans, the Cyprus government has also extended invitations to the leaders of warring Afghan factions. However, Taliban have refused to participate in the conference.

NATION

03 JUL 1999

## Tashkent talks fail to produce results

**TASHKENT, July 20** The Taliban and an opposition alliance failed to reach agreement on ending their conflict at peace talks on Tuesday, saying more diplomacy was needed to stop the fighting.

Representatives of the warring parties met in neighbouring Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent for two days of peace talks despite the Taliban saying it was preparing for a major summer offensive against its last remaining military foe.

They held bilateral talks after a so-called Six-plus-Two contact group meeting on Afghanistan, which urged the sides to end 20 years of factional, political and ethnic bloodshed.

"We had the opportunity to get together with the opposition," Afghan Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi told reporters.

"We spoke about a ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners and a continuation of talks, and it now depends on the decision of our

## Afghan groups to meet in Tashkent on July 19

**ISLAMABAD (NNI)** — The much-awaited conference of the "six plus two" group on Afghanistan has been convened in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan on July 19-20, official sources said on Tuesday.

Pakistan envoy for Afghanistan Iftikhar Murshid will represent Pakistan in the two-day moot, which will discuss ways for the peaceful settlement of Afghan turmoil, the sources told NNI. Members of the group include Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, the United States and Russia. The meeting is likely to be attended by some foreign ministers, deputy foreign ministers and senior officials of the member countries.

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leaderships," he said.

The representatives agreed to hold further meetings and the opposition alliance held out hope that these could stop the Taliban's preparation for a summer offensive.

"I think this is a good opportunity for peace," opposition spokesman Dr Abdullah said.

"We must use this opportunity in the interests of peace and a peaceful solution for our country."

Representatives from the opposition group said they knew the Taliban had started to prepare for an offensive.

The Six-plus-Two group drew up a declaration for the peace settlement on Monday, calling for a ceasefire. The group includes Pakistan, China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan plus the US and Russia.

While stressing the outcome of the two-day talks was positive, delegates said a breakthrough was elusive.—Reuters

DAWN

21 JUL 1999

# US willing to talk with Taliban on Osama

WASHINGTON, July 9: The United States said on Friday it was willing to negotiate with Afghan's Taliban movement in an effort to bring to justice Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden, accused of attacks on US interests.

"We would welcome the opportunity to negotiate bin Laden's return to face justice. We continue to urge the Taliban to resolve this issue. Bringing bin Laden to justice remains our bottom line," State Department deputy spokesman James Foley told Reuters.

Foley's comments were a direct attempt by Washington to test which of several recent contradictory messages from the Taliban might reflect the movement's true purpose.

"The Taliban has been trying to send signals. I've got one back," Foley said. "We've seen press reports that they want to negotiate with us ... (but) other reports say that they have no intention to turn him over and that he is protected in Afghanistan," Foley added.

The Taliban admitted on Thursday that bin Laden — indicted by the United States for last year's bombing of two US embassies in Africa — was still in the country under a special Taliban-led guard.

The admission came amid mounting diplomatic and economic pressure on the Taliban, including an executive White House order that banned US trade with Afghanistan.

In an executive order signed on Monday and effective from midnight (0400 GMT Tuesday), President Bill Clinton also froze any assets the Taliban or its leaders may have in the United States.

US officials said the last straw was intelligence information that bin Laden's group, accused of the bomb attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998 in which more than 220 people died, was planning to

attack other US embassies in Africa.

Six US embassies in Africa closed for a few days in June after they came under suspicious surveillance. The mission in the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo, has remained closed.

"Bin Laden continues to issue threats to kill Americans while enjoying the protection of the Taliban. At the same time his associates continue to engage in activities indicating pending planned terrorist attacks... So we finally decided to take action," said Foley.

The sanctions have made most Taliban members in Kabul jittery as did a US cruise missile attack on a suspected bin Laden base in eastern Afghanistan last August.

The Taliban, who reported bin Laden's "disappearance" last February, said on Thursday he was still in Afghanistan under a Taliban-led guard and offered Washington talks to resolve the issue.

The Taliban have offered to put bin Laden on trial if evidence is presented of his involvement in terrorism.

In responding positively to the Taliban offer of talks to resolve the issue, Foley insisted the United States was not violating its long-held policy of not negotiating with what it sees as terrorists.

While Washington considers bin Laden a "terrorist," it has not officially designated Afghanistan or the Taliban a sponsor of terrorism, he noted. In its annual report on terrorism worldwide issued last April, the State Department did, however, fault Afghanistan for not fully cooperating with anti-terror efforts.

The Taliban movement took control of Kabul three years ago and now controls most of the country. The Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Masood, holds pockets in the centre and northeast.

—Reuters

# Another US offensive against Osama

From Humayun Akhtar

WASHINGTON—While US officials are frustrated by their failure to seize the man they call the world's most dangerous terrorist, now they have moved on another front: to disrupt his financial base.

The US officials say they are somewhat encouraged by the belief that they may have succeeded in undermining the finances of Osama bin Laden.

The United States is trying to cut off the flow of money to his organization, usually known as Al Qaeda. In this context the first target for the United States has been the Dubai Islamic Bank.

US officials say the bank was helping Osama bin Laden hide and move his money. According to the US State Department spokesman James Foley, "The Dubai Emirate government has taken steps to clean up that bank and that includes the area of money laundering."

Osama bin Laden's organisation suffered a second financial blow, in bin Laden's native Saudi Arabia, as claimed by ABCNEWS. Sources tell ABCNEWS that a prominent and very wealthy Saudi banker, Khalid bin

Mahfouz, is being held by Saudi authorities, accused of using his bank to funnel money to charities and companies that are "fronts" for Osama bin Laden's organization.

ABCNEWS admits that such US successes have been limited, but officials say finding — and blocking — the stream of money to Osama bin Laden is critical to slowing his campaign against the United States.

According to ABCNEWS, the US intelligence also believes that Osama bin Laden, charged with masterminding the bombings last summer of two American embassies in East Africa, has plans to hit US targets again. The US Intelligence sources base their belief on recent communications intercepts, which indicate the planning stage is over and that an operation is under way. But there is still no clear evidence of where or when Osama bin Laden might strike.

Osama bin Laden's whereabouts had been a mystery until Thursday, when the Taliban acknowledged that Osama bin Laden was still in the country and under their guard. On learning this, the State Department said it's willing to negotiate with the Taliban in order to

get its hands on the exiled Saudi multimillionaire.

But, in a related news, circulated by Reuter, Taliban government, undeterred by Washington's recently imposed economic sanctions against the Taliban on Tuesday in an effort to put pressure on the movement has refused on Saturday to extradite Osama bin Laden to the United States to face charges of masterminding US embassy bombings in Africa last year that killed more than 250 people. Osama bin Laden is among America's top 10 most wanted men.

The Taliban's chief spokesman, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, told that the movement, which is not recognized as a government except by three regional allies, had no extradition agreements with any country. "We have no commitment or extradition agreement with any of the world's governments to hand over an accused person," said Muttawakil in response to US demands that bin Laden be extradited to America or a third country. "In addition to that, the US has failed to present to us any proof showing his involvement in any terrorist act," he said.

The statement appeared to be a response to a US offer on Friday to nego-

tiate with the Taliban on bringing bin Laden to justice in connection with last year's bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

Muttawakil said that a US offer of a \$5 million reward for information leading to bin Laden's arrest was unfair. He repeated the Taliban's position that bin Laden is in Afghanistan with a special guard but his precise whereabouts are unknown. The Taliban acknowledged on Thursday that he was still in Afghanistan after a London *Sunday news* paper said he had been seen in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

The United States launched a cruise missile attack last year on suspected bases of bin Laden in southern Afghanistan and has not ruled out the possibility of more attacks.

The US has also renewed its advice to US citizens not to travel to Afghanistan. However, Muttawakil said the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, was issuing a statement on Saturday guaranteeing the safety of US citizens in the country. "In the statement, it says that all US citizens can travel and stay safely in the Taliban areas provided they have proper travel documents," he said.

DAWN

12 JUL 2003

## Business with Afghanistan

# US firm to ignore Clinton's orders

By Our Correspondent

NEW YORK, July 9: A New Jersey based small telephone company has decided to ignore President Bill Clinton's decree banning American companies from doing business with the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Mr Clinton had issued the ban on Monday accusing the Taliban of harbouring Osama bin Laden, who is suspected of masterminding the bombings of US embassies in East Africa.

The company, Telephone Systems International of Parsippany, New Jersey, announced in September of last year that it had won a 240 million dollar contract to set up wireless phone systems in Afghanistan. The company says it is a first significant project in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979.

The company started work on the project in May of this year at

its offices in Kabul and Kandahar, putting in telephone lines that could be used to transmit calls through satellite systems.

In an interview with a local newspaper, Michael Cecil, a British citizen, who is a major investor in the project, said that he had not received any orders from the US government as yet. Besides, he insisted even if he received such orders, he would move the project to Great Britain where American laws would not apply.

Cecil was of the opinion that Mr Clinton's order would only make it more difficult for the American government to capture Osama bin Laden.

Last year, the American companies spent over 24 million dollars in Afghanistan before withdrawing from the region. Unocal, an American oil company, withdrew from a \$20 billion oil pipeline project last year.

## Washington deplores Afghan politician's murder

WASHINGTON (AP) - The United States condemned the murder in Pakistan of Afghan politician and ex-fighter Abdul Ahad Karzai, who resided in the United States. The State Department said it was a "tragic loss" to Afghanistan.

"We deplore the tragic killing of Afghan tribal leader and former Senator Abdul Ahad Karzai," the State Department said in a statement late Wednesday.

Mr. Karzai was the distinguished leader of the Populzai tribe and a major voice for moderation among the Pushtun tribes, the statement added. Karzai, who had arrived in Pakistan a few days earlier, was gunned down by automatic rifles as he emerged from a mosque. Two other worshippers were also killed. The State Department said Karzai's killers, who fled on a motorcycle, have not been identified.

The statement said Karzai "played a significant role in the fight against the Soviet occupation of his country," adding that he was also "active in trying to find peace" in his homeland. "Our sympathies go out to his family and friends," the statement added.

# US reacts angrily to Taliban attack

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, July 29: The US has warned the Taliban to make a choice between "confrontation or cooperation" with the US as a senior State Department official said Washington was prepared if they chose confrontation.

Reacting angrily to the latest Taliban offensive against its opponents, Assistant Secretary Karl Inderfurth told a news conference: "We are ready for both."

He said the latest offensive was not a good sign as it negated the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration signed by the Six-plus-Two and endorsed by the Taliban.

"This offensive flies in the face of the Tashkent Declaration and to escalate the conflict calls into question the commitments made by the Taliban," Inderfurth said.

"They have to make a choice. If they want cooperation of the US or want confrontation, we are ready to move in either direction."

The comment gave rise to immediate speculation that the US was preparing for another strike against the Taliban which were declared as a national security threat last week by the President Clinton and sanc-

tions were imposed against them, although Afghanistan has not yet been declared a terrorist state.

He said the Taliban were providing a safe haven to Osama Bin Laden. "It is necessary for Taliban to hand him over to justice, either in the US or any other place. If they choose cooperation we are ready, if not we are prepared," he said giving an apparent warning about possible attacks like those last year when cruise missiles were fired

## See also Back Page

from the sea across Pakistan on camps in Afghanistan.

Osama is not honouring the Afghan people. He is misusing their hospitality as a guest, the US official said.

Inderfurth said the Taliban should talk to the united front as no military solution was possible in Afghanistan.

He said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had clearly understood what the US position was on Taliban and he urged them to use their influence to end the fighting in Afghanistan.

DAWN

NATION

# AI warns of human rights violations in Afghanistan

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, July 30: Amnesty International (AI) has warned that thousands of civilians in northern Afghanistan can suffer serious human rights abuses unless international community takes action to protect them as the war in the area escalates.

"Once again, civilians are the likely targets of human rights abuses in the context of a conflict they have no active part in", an AI statement said here on Thursday.

"Caught in a game of war between armed groups they have only the international community to turn for protection", the statement said.

The organization's warning came in the wake of a major offensive launched by the Taliban militia against the opposition forces led by former Afghan defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood.

It said hundreds of civilians had been killed following similar offensives in the recent past.

"Both the Taliban and the anti-Taliban forces have committed gross human rights abuses against Afghan civilians in the past. What guarantees are there that they will spare civilians this time?"

"Will the world again stand and watch as more civilians die, or will this opportunity be seized to protect them and prevent abuses from taking place?" the statement said.

The organization has called upon all parties to the conflict to abide by the principles of international humanitarian law and respect to security and physical integrity of the civilian population in Afghanistan.

It stressed the international community to protect civilians of the Tajik minority group in the Panjshir valley, as well as those living in other parts of Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, civilians who are unable to flee immediately after a new area is captured are often subjected to systematic abuses by the victorious forces. Thousands have been massacred, beaten or ill-treated. Others have died of suffocation while being transported to detention centres in metal containers, it said.

According to AI statement serious human rights abuses were reported from the Bamiyan province in April this year as Taliban and anti-Taliban forces fought over the area, and hundreds of houses were reportedly burnt by Taliban forces as they gained control over the area.

The Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, condemned these house burnings, saying they came in retaliation for earlier house burnings by the anti-Taliban forces. However, his statement only came after the abuses had occurred.

Men, women, young children, at times entire families, were reportedly killed by Taliban guards. In some cases, women and children were reportedly separated from their families and taken away, not to be seen again.

Serious human rights abuses by the anti-Taliban forces against the civilian population were also reported at the same time. Massacres by different sides also took places in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997 and 1998 following offensives to capture that city.

## 'Osama has new base in Afghanistan'

LONDON, July 4: Britain's *Observer* weekly reported on Sunday that Osama bin Laden had moved to the hills of eastern Afghanistan from where he continues to operate his international network.

It said he was living in a former Soviet collective farm in the village of Farmihadda, south of Jalalabad, which he bought from the Taliban last October.

He moved in two months ago, is reportedly protected by his own security and Taliban fighters, and was seen in Jalalabad as recently as Tuesday. The *Observer* cites local landowners, aid workers, a military commander and security service informants and western security sources for its story.

The United States has offered a five-million-dollar reward for information leading to his capture.

According to the *Observer*, Bin Laden has survived two recent assassination attempts, while intelligence sources in Islamabad said a third was discovered six weeks ago and all those involved were killed.

The paper said he came to know the area of eastern Afghanistan well while fighting against the Russians who used to occupy the country.

He moves constantly for security reasons, but a serious medical condition and back problems are said to be making travel more difficult.—AFP

DAWN

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## Iran warns against mily aid for rival Afghan factions

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran on Sunday warned against giving military assistance to Afghanistan's warring factions after fresh attacks melted all hopes for further peace talks.

Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi called for an end to 'any military assistance to Afghan rival factions,' in a bid to 'prevent escalation of clashes and further fratricide in Afghanistan,' the official IRNA news agency said.

Asefi underlined the need to solve the conflict through negotiation and stressed Iran's full support for peace efforts by the United Nations as well as the so-called 'Six-plus-Two' group in Uzbekistan's capital of Tashkent.

The Taliban militia controls around 80 per cent of Afghanistan, but its attempts to extend its control to the entire country have been resisted by the opposition Northern Alliance.

Iran has had strained relations with the Taliban since the murder of several Iranian diplomats and a journalist during the Taliban's capture of the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif last year. But a Taliban official said Saturday the militia were ready for fence-mending talks with Tehran.

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# Taliban too bad for their own good, says Sartaj

LONDON (Internews) – Pakistan Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz has said the Afghan Taliban's interpretation of Islam is not acceptable even in Islamic states that apply the Shariah.

"I believe their interpretation of Islam is not acceptable even where Sharia is the law," Aziz said in an interview to the London-based Arabic magazine *Al-Wasat*. He was mentioning the negative points of Taliban, as seen by the world.

"Those who went to Afghanistan to fight the Russians were motivated by a strong religious faith. But all that changed when they moved from jihad to official responsibility and faced the strong reality," he said.

"It seems from my personal observations that the Taliban leaders are not prepared to slacken until they have secured full control of the whole of Afghanistan. The Taliban's failure in dealing with the foreign media is also a negative point," he said.

"On the other hand," he pointed out, "the Afghan opposition abroad has been successful in discrediting the Taliban by relating stories, albeit exaggerated ones, about the movement."

Moreover, Sartaj Aziz added, the Taliban do not have the experience or the ability to convey a positive or even a realistic picture of their situation.

"For example, when Taliban announced they had set up a committee to investigate the incidents that followed the occupation of Mazar-e-Sharif, we in the Pakistan Foreign Ministry needed three days to obtain clarification about the committee and its role.

"This would not have taken long had there been well-trained media teams

that could deal with such incidents and issues. But, the Iranian experiment under Ayatollah Khomeini also passed through a similar phase, and it took several years to adjust," he explained.

He said in the case of Taliban supremo Mullah Omar, no one knows him outside Afghan borders.

About Pakistan's role in efforts to reach a common ground between Afghan opposition and the Taliban, Aziz said Islamabad had made some moves towards Central Asia and Iran.

Responding to charges that the Taliban govt backs or protects terrorism by hosting persons like Osama bin Ladin, Aziz said when a country is left without authority or government for a period of 10 years, many outlaws are bound to use it as a safe haven.

Asked if the United States had requested Pakistan to expel Osama bin Ladin from Afghanistan or deliver him to it, Sartaj said Islamabad's ability to cooperate with the United States regarding its request on Ladin was limited.

"There is huge US interest in this subject. The Americans requested us to use our relations in order to reach some result on this subject. We fight terrorism and we have had some experience in delivering wanted persons or cooperating in their arrest.

"But, Osama bin Ladin does not exist in our territory," Sartaj Aziz added.

To a question, Sartaj Aziz said India's stand on the issue of Kashmir is not flexible and New Delhi should stop the current escalation or be ready to face unforeseen consequences. "I repeat my call to the Indian side to stop the escalation out of fear that its repercussions could lead to steps with unforeseen con-

sequences," he said in an interview to London-based Arabic magazine *Al-Wasat* in its latest issue.

"Pakistan's call for calming down the situation does not imply fear because we are sure of our armed forces' ability to protect our borders," Aziz emphasised.

Talking about Islamabad's efforts to defuse the Kashmir situation, Aziz said Pakistan had all along been drawing the world's attention that non-resolution of the Kashmir crisis would lead to greater tension between the two countries.

"We have also said that the people on the Indian side of Kashmir have the right to resort to all kinds of methods in order to achieve their aims. There are clear UN resolutions giving Kashmiris the right to determine their own destiny," he said.

"This election climate might encourage some Indian officials to tense up the situation and call for a major Indian military offensive," he said.

"The large number of casualties among the Indian forces in this phase could also make it difficult for Indian party leaders to accept the present climate," the Foreign Minister warned.

"This stand is not flexible. They continue saying that Kashmir is a part of India and that there is nothing to be discussed there. Our reply to them is that there isn't a single country in the world that recognises Kashmir as a part of India," Aziz made it clear.

"We said: If Kashmir is indeed a part of India, why do you need to deploy 700,000 soldiers there; or seven Indian soldiers for every Kashmiri? The number of those killed in the past 10 years exceeded 60,000.

# US planning to target Afghanistan: JUI

By Our Reporter

LAHORE, July 12: The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam secretary-general Maulana Fazlur Rahman has warned that the US which has alerted its forces plans to take a major military action against Afghanistan for providing shelter to Osama bin Laden.

Addressing a Press conference here on Monday the JUI leader said the plan to attack Afghanistan would be executed by extending full support to the forces of Ahmad Shah Masud against Taliban.

He said one of the reasons for withdrawal of Mujahideen from Kargil was the proposed military action by the US against Afghanistan as it considered them a big threat to its security and apprehended that they could obstruct its plan.

He asked the US to stop its interference in the region. He said it was not Osama but America a terrorist country which had dropped atom bombs on Japan and used chemical and all dangerous weapons in Vietnam. How was it now claiming to be champion of human rights, he asked.

He said the US demand to Afghanistan for handing over Osama bin Laden to it was unjustified and illegal as there was no prisoners' extradition treaty between the two countries.

He said the Afghan government had asked the US to provide evidence of charges against Osama but it failed to do so. Thus the demand for handing over Osama to US was illegal and unjust.

Referring to the Kashmir issue, the Maulana said it has been permanently buried following the joint statement of President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He said the statement had betrayed

the people and Mujahideen of Kashmir whose freedom movement had received a great setback. He feared that it would also have serious reaction to their demand for the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan.

He said the people of Pakistan had not given Mr Sharif heavy mandate for taking such a bad decision. No explanation or interpretation of the decision would be acceptable to the people nor would it be reasonable, he added.

He said the JUI was of the opinion that the withdrawal of Mujahideen from Kargil would put an end to the Kashmir issue once and for all. The JUI had decided to observe a protest day on Friday (July 16) throughout the country by holding rallies and protest meetings.

He said the government should have taken into consideration all options before undertaking the Kargil operation, the options of a nuclear war and its deteriorating financial conditions, etc. He said it was clear to the entire world who was supporting the Kashmiri freedom struggle as no other country but Pakistan was behind the movement.

The JUI leader said the government had miserably failed on Kashmir issue and it had no right to stay even for a day. He said all political parties which had issued a resolution in an all-parties conference on the Kashmir issue should hold another conference to reconsider the issue.

He said the people had lost faith in democracy after the misdeeds of the rulers and they want to change not the government but the present system with a new system based on Islamic principles.

## CBR permits Afghan NGOs to import vehicles

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD; July 12: Central Board of Revenue has allowed import of vehicles duty-free but in a limited number by the Afghanistan-related NGOs for three months.

Dawn learnt from Central Board of Revenue sources here on Monday that the federal government took a decision to this effect after a number of representations by the Afghanistan-related NGOs after the presentation of federal budget 1999-2000.

In this connection, a Customs General Order has been issued on July 12 which says: During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, a large number of refugees shifted to Pakistan and Iran along with their families. The prolonged war had a devastating effect on the economy and the economic activity of the country.

After the Soviet withdrawal the work of rehabilitation of the economy and the refugees was undertaken by the United Nations and some friendly countries through the NGOs.

The CBR, as a conscious decision, allowed the NGOs, the headquarters of which were located at Peshawar and Islamabad, to use Afghanistan-registered vehicles use in Pakistan on temporary basis.

Since the head offices of most of the NGOs are based at Peshawar and in order to streamline the procedure and to alleviate the problems/grievances being faced by the NGOs, the CBR is pleased to delegate the owners under Section 21 of the Customs Act, 1969, to the collector of Customs and Central Excise, Peshawar, to allow temporary importation of a very limited number of Afghanistan registered vehicles for the bonafide use of the NGOs which are doing rehabilitation work inside Afghanistan for a period of three months only.

The conditions set for this purpose are: The collector shall maintain a detailed information in a master register and shall also submit a monthly statement to the CBR by the 7th of the following month to which it relates regarding the total number of vehicles allowed till the end of the month. Collector of Customs, Peshawar shall ensure that the facility is not misused by the unscrupulous elements.

The following details would have to be submitted by the collector Customs, Peshawar, to the CBR: name of NGO; model and make of the vehicle; chassis number of the vehicle; engine number of the vehicle; date of issue of authority to import; date of expiry of the authority.

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## Afghan leader's murder condemned

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, July 20: Pukhtoon-khwa Qaumi Party (PQP) chief Latif Afridi, MNA, has condemned the assassination of Abdul Ahad Karzai, an Afghan leader. Karzai was recently shot dead in Quetta allegedly in a terrorist attack.

In his statement, the tribal MNA paid homage to the late Karzai for his peace-making efforts to promote national understanding and reconciliation among various Afghan factions. Mr Afridi said that Karzai's death was an irreparable

loss to the national cause of Afghan people.

On behalf of his party, Afridi said that the PQP deplored such acts of terrorism against prominent Afghan figures residing in Pakistan.

He said it was regrettable that the Pakistan government had so far not been able to track down any of the culprits responsible for the physical elimination of Afghan notables striving for a just resolution of the ongoing genocidal conflict in Afghanistan.

## 96 detonators recovered from Afghan national

By Abrar Saeed

RAWALPINDI - Police and Excise officials during their routine checking on Monday near Rawat recovered 96 detonators from a person heading for Lahore from Peshawar and registered a case against him under Explosive Act.

The officials of Excise and police were searching the vehicles at Channi Bridge checkpoint when they recovered some 96 detonators from the luggage of Gul Zameen Khan, an Afghan national, and booked him under Explosive Act.

Gul Zameen Khan was coming from Peshawar and his destination was Lahore. Police sources said that the detonators were packed in six small boxes which were concealed in the cloths. These detonators were of high quality and could be used for detonating heavy explosives, police officials said.

The detonators were sent for further examination and further investigations are in progress. The case against Gul Zameen Khan was registered in Police Station, Rawat.

## JUI (F) concerned over US get-Osama activities in Pakistan

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD - Maulana Shirani, parliamentary leader of JUI(F), Thursday expressed his concern over the reports that American commandoes had landed in Peshawar to conduct an operation for arresting Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi dissident who is wanted by US in alleged terrorist activities, from Afghanistan.

He was speaking in the National Assembly on a point of order. He said people of Pakistan were apprehensive that the government was supporting these commandoes in arresting Ladin. He asked the government to commit whether the report of American commandoes was authentic or not.

He said there were reports that some American ships were close to Gwadar which indicated that they were preparing for launching another attack on La-

din in Afghanistan.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Yaseen Wattoo said he would pass on the concern of Maulana to the Foreign Office.

On another point of order deputy Opposition leader Khurshid Shah alleged that the government had arrested a banker from Lahore and brought him to Islamabad as he had detected some default on part of Redco.

He alleged the banker, Naeem-ur-Rehman, was working on recovering Rs one billion default of Redco against UBL. The Speaker Illahi Bakhsh Soomro advised Shah to move a calling attention notice in this regard.

A privilege motion moved by Chaudhry Bashir Virk regarding release of funds by the Health Ministry in favour of MNAs for purchase of medicines was referred to the privilege committee.

Virk maintained that the government had fixed funds for MNAs in the budget. These funds are misused by ministry officials and the Parliamentarians are blamed for taking medicines.

Health Minister Javed Hashmi did not oppose the motion and said that earlier funds in the name of purchasing medicines were withheld on the request of the Parliamentarians.

A group of Maulanas from Opposition, ruling party and FATA objected to the Speaker saying that he did not adjourn the proceedings for prayers on last Wednesday when the House was holding a debate on Kashmir situation.

Maulana Shirani and Maulana Abdul Ghani of JUI(F), Javed Ibrahim Paracha and Moeenuddin Lakhvi of the ruling party and Maulana Noor Mohammad of FATA said the House should have been adjourned for the Maghrib prayers.

The Speaker defended his position saying the House was debating an important issue. Later, he advised Yaseen Wattoo to take notice of the attitude of the ruling party members.

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# JUI MNA fears another attack on Osama's hideouts

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD, July 22: Another possible attack on Osama bin Ladin's hideouts in Afghanistan by the United States was the first issue that was taken up by the National Assembly here on Thursday.

Maulana Mohammad Sheerani of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, soon after the recitation of verses from Holy Quran, apprehended that another attack by the US on Ladin was in offing.

Rising on a point of order, Maulana said that the US commandos had already arrived in Peshawar and Quetta to launch another offensive against Ladin. He said a US warship was also in the area to repeat the last year's missile attack on Ladin's hideout in Afghanistan. Maulana Sheerani wanted an explanation from the Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz whether Pakistan would again allow the US to use its soil and airspace to attack Afghanistan.

Maulana insisted that it was a matter of great importance so the government should immediately clear its position. There was, however, no one from government's side to respond to his concern.

Speaker Elahi Bukhsh Soomro asked the ministers, present on the occasion, to convey JUI leader's concern to the foreign minister. He also promised Sheerani that he would be given a chance to raise the issue again once the foreign minister or the minister of state turned up.

The issue that was taken up after Sheerani's point of order was about the continuation of the National Assembly's Wednesday evening session despite Azan for Maghrib prayers.

Maulanas from both sides of the political divide were united that the speaker should have adjourned the house for the evening prayers instead of allowing Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz to complete his winding up speech on Kargil.

Maulana Abdul Ghani of Jamiat Ulema Islam, on a point of order, said that it was illegal, immoral and against the teachings of Islam.

The speaker admitted that the sitting should have been adjourned and promised that in future it would not happen. The MNAs belonging to treasury benches including Maulana Lakhvi, Maulana Javed Ibrahim Paracha and Maulana Noor Mohammad were also upset over this and insisted that there was nothing important more than to offer prayers in time.

Maulana Sheerani also supported this point but minister for parliamentary affairs Yasin Wattoo said that the sitting was adjourned well in time to allow the members to say their prayers. Some of the members though did not agree with him. He disclosed that the prime minister had also asked the foreign minister to summarise his winding up speech so that the prayer time should not be missed.

## Pakistan desires peace in Afghanistan: PM

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that Pakistan earnestly desires the restoration of peace in Afghanistan and in this regard fully supports the United Nations efforts to bring peace in the war-torn country.

The Prime Minister made these remarks in a meeting with the United Nations Special Envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi who called on him in Governor House Murree on Thursday. The Prime Minister assured the UN Special Envoy of Pakistan's full support to its efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan. He told the UN Envoy that Pakistan has always supported the UN efforts in this regard and Pakistan's own Afghan diplomacy is only meant to augment UN peace efforts.

Senior officials of the Foreign Office were also present during the meeting in which the latest situation in Afghanistan came under discussion.

Brahimi briefed the Prime Minister on the proceedings of the Six Plus Two meeting in Tashkent held on 19th and 20th of this month.

It was on Pakistan's request that Taliban accepted the invitation to participate in the meeting of Six Plus Two with their rivals, Northern Alliance. However, in the Six Plus Two meeting the two warring factions failed to reach any agreement regarding the cease-fire.

During the meeting, Brahimi expressed concern over the new fighting which has broken out between Taliban and Masood forces in north of Afghanistan.

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## Osama repatriation matter between US, Afghanistan: Shujat

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD - Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain says Pakistan has nothing to do with the repatriation of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to the United States or any other country from Afghanistan.

"The matter is between the United States and Afghanistan, where Osama is living," he said while talking to The Nation on Friday. "Pakistan cannot do anything for repatriation of the Saudi dissident to any country because Afghanistan is an independent and sovereign state."

Chaudhry Shujaat said allegations hurled by some quarters that there was any deal on repatriation of Osama during Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's talks with President Clinton in Washington

on July 4 were totally baseless and unfounded. He said these circles have tried to unnecessarily implicate Pakistan in an issue with which Islamabad has nothing to do.

He said that Washington should directly talk to Kabul about the Saudi dissident and request its friendly countries to use their influence to persuade the Afghan government to repatriate Osama bin Laden if it wants so.

Our Lahore Correspondent adds: Pakistan would not allow its land for any action against Saudi tycoon Mujahid Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said on Friday. He said Pakistan was not involved in any activity regarding the arrest of Osama Bin Laden.

He said, this may be the headache of Americans and Afghanistan but Pakistan has nothing to do with this search activity and that the government would not compromise over the sovereignty of the country.

He denied presence of American commandos in any part of the country. He said, "we know how to maintain our integrity and independence. we will not allow any intrusion in our country".

Explaining Kargil policy of the government, he said that international community now has recognised our firm stance on Kargil issue as US has asked Indians to initiate meaningful dialogue with Pakistan.

He said the government has been quite successful in internationalising Kashmir issue which the international community had put in cold storage, earlier.

He said the present government derives strength from the people of Pakistan in chalking out such policies, "because we believe in people of Pakistan."

He was confident that masses would continue supporting the government on its bold and courageous policy on Kargil issue because they were well aware of the sensitivity of the situation hoping they would not encourage any rejected and pessimistic elements with ulterior political motives.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain warned India not to underestimate Pakistan and if there was any adventurous activity from that side, "we are ready to meet that challenge and know how to defend our homeland", he said.

Our Special Correspondent from Islamabad adds:

Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain says Pakistan has nothing to do with the repatriation of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to the United States or any other country from Afghanistan.

"The matter is between the United States and Afghanistan, where Osama is living," he said while talking to The Nation on Friday. "Pakistan cannot do anything for repatriation of the Saudi dissident to any country because Afghanistan is an independent and sovereign State."

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Fresh bid for peace in Afghanistan

# North alliance, Taliban agree to hold talks

TASHKENT, July 19: The Taliban and the Northern Alliance agreed on Monday to hold bilateral talks early on Tuesday in a last-ditch bid to stave off a new armed clash in the coming weeks.

Representatives of the warring parties, in Uzbekistan amid tight security for a two-day meeting of the six-plus-two contact group on Afghanistan, were urged to put an end to 20 years of factional, political and ethnic bloodshed.

U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi was cautious on the likely outcome of the discussions after previous agreements to set up a broad-based government had failed.

"This is a formalization of an agreement between the eight countries and for the first time the two Afghan parties sat down together with those eight countries," he said in the Central Asian state's capital of Tashkent.

"It now all depends on how this is going to be transformed into acts. We will see, we will see," he added.

Talk of peace comes amid preparations by both sides for a major summer offensive.

"We know that such preparations are being made by the Taliban," opposition spokesman Dr

Abdullah said.

The Six-plus-Two group, comprising the six countries bordering Afghanistan, including Pakistan, plus the United States and Russia, drew up a declaration for a peaceful settlement of the conflict which called for a ceasefire and bilateral discussions.

Brahimi and delegates from the group urged both sides to come to negotiate before widespread fighting broke out.

"We are very worried about these huge preparations for a new assault by both sides," Brahimi said. "There were appeals to both sides to refrain from starting these ritual measures during summer time."

The group's declaration raised concerns over the Taliban concealing and training "terrorists", saying this posed a threat not only to Afghanistan and its neighbours, but also further afield.

The declaration also called for human rights, particularly those of women and girls, to be observed.

The countries in the group promised to stop providing military support to either faction and to help Afghanistan control the flood of drugs across its borders. While

## North alliance, Taliban agree to hold talks

Continued from Page 1

stressing that the outcome of Monday's talks was positive, delegates emphasized that the key meeting between the Afghan parties themselves had yet to take place.

"We would now like to see a positive movement in response (to the declaration) from the two sides," Tajik Deputy Foreign Minister Gulomzhon Mirzoyev told a news briefing.

Taliban Information Minister

Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi gave the Tashkent talks a cautious welcome. "I am sure these meetings will be helpful for peace in Afghanistan," he said through a translator. The opposition's Abdullah, saying he rued the missed opportunities in the past, only added: "Why not be hopeful?"

The Taliban had originally refused to attend the Tashkent talks because none of the Six-plus-Two group's members except Pakistan recognizes the Taliban government.—Reuters

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# No deal with America on get-Osama action: PM

From Our Correspondent

LAHORE—Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has publicly refuted for the first time that during Washington Summit he had given any assurance to President Clinton for supporting the US Operation against Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

"We did not discuss this issue at all," the PM said when his attention was drawn to the allegation levelled by the opposition leaders that what had not been included in the Washington Declaration was Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's assurance to President Clinton that Pakistan would extend all-out support to the United States for Osama's arrest.

Talking to newsmen after playing cricket at Bagh-i-Jinnah on Saturday, Mian Nawaz implicitly referring to his recent visit to the United States said whatever decision he had taken was in the best national interests as well as in accordance with the wishes of the people of Pakistan.

"Let's seek public opinion" the PM asked the journalists while pointing to

the people he was surrounded by. And there was a constant shout: "You did the right thing. You have saved the people of both the countries from destruction and so on so forth." But the one view he did not agree to was that 'Pakistan cannot afford war'.

"Don't say so. We can afford everything," the PM shot back. But he firmly believed that it would not have been a right decision to engage in any major conflict with India. He reminded the audience of his speech in which he had stated that 'there was no use of a war in which it would be difficult to determine who is the winner.'

As Mian Nawaz was convinced that he had taken a right decision vis-a-vis Kargil issue, he was least bothered about the adverse editorial comments and articles appearing in certain newspapers nor did he care for the protest rallies and demonstrations the opposition had been staging against the government these days.

At this point the PM specifically blamed Nawa-i-Waqt for writing adverse editorials and articles. But he said whatever anybody feels he is convinced that he had taken a right decision keep-

ing in view the larger national interests.

NATION

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## Pakistan closely watching new Afghan developments

ISLAMABAD (Internews) — Pakistan is closely watching the fighting that has broken out between the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan and their opposition Northern Alliance forces.

Afghan watchers told Internews in Islamabad on Thursday that the renewed Taliban offensive against its opponents holed up in the north was an effort to gain control over the remaining ten percent of the country currently not in its jurisdiction.

They said Pakistan would welcome an outright victory for the Taliban, but Iran, Russia and some Central Asian states fear a Taliban victory could mean the export of their extreme form of Islam to the rest of the region.

"The West also realises that a major Taliban victory would make it increasingly difficult to continue their opposition to the Taliban taking Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations," one expert said.

Last week UN Secretary General's

Special Envoy to Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi had warned of the impending military offensive by saying that arms were "pouring" into Afghanistan from neighbouring countries.

Apparently a swipe at Pakistan, which is accused of backing the Taliban and Iran, a supporter of the Northern Alliance, Brahimi urged the Taliban and its foes to declare a halt to three years of war.

Taliban forces have reportedly been bolstered by the arrival of recruits - including allegedly hundreds of Pakistani and Arab nationals - for a fresh offensive against opposition forces led by veteran commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Meanwhile, according to the BBC Thursday, the Taliban are attacking positions held by the opposition Northern Alliance around the strategic Panjshir valley.

It is now almost five years since the Taliban movement sprang from no-

where to seize the southern Afghan city of Kandahar.

The Taliban have launched major offensives each summer since then, taking new cities and gradually extending their rule throughout most of Afghanistan.

Some observers believe that the Taliban cannot afford to wait another year before trying to capture the remaining territory held by the Northern Alliance. They say this summer's campaign could be crucial.

Afghanistan's neighbours will be watching closely. The fighting directly affects the interests of regional countries, many of whom support Afghanistan's various warring factions.

Although the Taliban have been in power in Kabul since 1996, the United States and the European Union, in particular, have opposed moves to recognise the Taliban's largely Pashtoon administration and give it Afghanistan's seat at UN.

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# Serious consequences if Osama attacked, JUI warns US

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR— Chief of his own faction of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman has warned the American government of dire consequences if it launched air strikes either against Afghanistan or Arab militant Osama bin Laden.

"After US attack on Afghanistan, there will be a declared war between the Americans and the Muslims whereas the latter would wage a jihad against the former," he remarked while addressing a well-attended public meeting here on Saturday. The public rally was arranged by JUI in connection with its agitation against withdrawal of mujahideen from the Kargil as well as to denounce the frequent US threats to Afghanistan.

Besides Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, the gathering was addressed by party's Provincial Secretary General Maulana Gul Naseeb Khan, Maulana Sher Ali Shah, Maulana Mohammad Idrees, Abdul Jalil Jan, Ghulam Sadiq etc. The JUI activists wearing black and white turbans along with some like-minded Afghans assembled at Kabul Chowk early Saturday morning. After listening detailed speeches to their leaders, the demonstrated proceeded in a procession towards Civil Secretariat but they were asked to disperse by Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman at Jail Bridge. The angry activists during the rally demonstrated the worst kind of anger against USA, the Pakistan government and India and chanted slogans.

The Maulana while showing his

grave concern over the renewed US threats to Afghanistan reminded its rulers about the fate of former Soviet Union and said its threats are a blatant interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, therefore, it needs to stop such tactics. He said Afghanistan is an independent state and has the right to provide shelter to its guests. Similarly, he said there exists no extradition treaty between the US and Afghanistan, so there is no jus-

tification for the Americans to demand extradition of Osama bin Laden, who is a guest of Afghanistan.

The JUI chief said all of them are Pukhtoons and are determined to protect their guests, so in their presence no one can harm Osama bin Laden. He alleged that Pakistan is again providing safe route to USA for launching air strikes against Osama. He urged the rulers to refrain.

## People shifting to safer places sensing possible US attack

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – In the wake of speculated USA air strikes on Afghanistan, a number of foreign nationals besides Afghans shifting to safer places and in this connection three officers of UN agencies entered Pakistan on Saturday.

Reports from Pak-Afghan border reveal that two Australians and one Canadian national arrived at Torkham from Kabul. The Australian couple was identified as Simon Charles and his wife Dr Karen Lees Richard. The former is a programme Manager and the latter is a physician associated with an UN agency.

Similarly, the Canadian national Anita Louise is a research officer in one of the UN agencies, busy in relief activities inside Afghanistan.

The officials of various agencies guarding Torkham have informed that a large number of Afghans fearing US air strikes against Afghanistan are entering Pakistan. While the renewed US threats to Afghanistan as well as to Osama has also affected the flow of repatriating refugees, they added.

from such a conspiracy otherwise he warned of dire consequences. He further said that if JUI went for implementation of its threats against Afghanistan he would declare jihad against the US citizens in all over the country. He urged all of CIA and other US officers to immediately leave Pakistan as they (the JUI and Taliban) are determined to safeguard their guests and heros.

Commenting on the withdrawal from Kargil by the government, the Maulana said that through it the rulers have made a bargain with the US to remain in power. He while elaborating his point of view said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is neither interested in liberation of Kashmir nor safeguarding national interests but he wants, Fazl said, to develop his family's trade links with India. However, the Muslim nation is determined to foil such conspiracies.

## Pakistan won't allow its land for attack on Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, July 27: The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Siddique Kanju, on Tuesday assured the National Assembly that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used against any other country.

He was replying to a point of order by Maulana Muhammad Khan Shirani, who was of the view that the US naval fleet was moving towards Pakistan's territorial waters and there was a danger of US missile attacks on Afghanistan. The MNA also said that the American commandos have entered Afghanistan.

The minister categorically stated that no group had entered Afghanistan from Pakistani territory.

He also referred to a detailed statement of the interior minister stating that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used against any other country.

To a point of order by Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah, the minister for water and Power Gohar Ayub Khan said that Sindh was getting more irrigation water than its request.

He said that Sindh had given an intent of 1,90,000 cusec feet. As against this, it was provided 2,27,000 cusec feet from Chashma and another 2,77,000 cusec from Taunsa barrages.—NNI

DAWN

28 JUL 1999

## Osama a dispute between US, Afghanistan: Sartaj

By Our Monitoring Desk

Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz has strongly dispelled the impression that Kargil issue has left Pakistan isolated at international level.

In an interview with VOG on Friday, Sartaj Aziz said 56 OIC countries backed Pakistan's stand on the issue and extended full support in this regard. "They blamed Indian government for over-reacting and amassing more than 50,000 soldiers to gain political mileage," he added.

The Foreign Minister said India has miserably failed in its campaign to brand the Kashmiris freedom struggle as a terrorism movement supported by Pakistan. "During his recent European trip no country accepted that the Kashmiris freedom movement was not indigenous," he elaborated.

"The European countries have made it to clear to India that until New Delhi is serious in resolving the Kashmir problem the freedom struggle neither can be rolled back nor wound up," he said.

Sartaj Aziz said government's decision to send Niaz A. Naik to India during Kargil crisis was need of the hour as tension between the two countries was running high. "The government adopted track-2 diplomacy to defuse the tension but India refused to accept our offer," he added.

He rejected reports that the US has sent some people from Pakistan to Afghanistan to capture Osama bin Laden. "We would not allow anyone to use our territory for launching any attack on a third country. Osama is a dispute between US and Afghanistan and we have nothing to do with it," he remarked.

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## Pakistan has nothing to do with Osama

ISLAMABAD, July 30: Pakistan has nothing to do with the movement of Osama bin Laden, the Saudi dissident living as a guest of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Foreign Office Spokesman, Tariq Altaf, said on Friday.

He was asked to comment on press reports that the Saudi dissident wanted by the United States for his alleged involvement in the bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August last year was planning to leave Afghanistan for another destination.

"The matter is between the Afghan government and Osama bin Laden and Pakistan has nothing to do in this regard," he stressed.—PPI

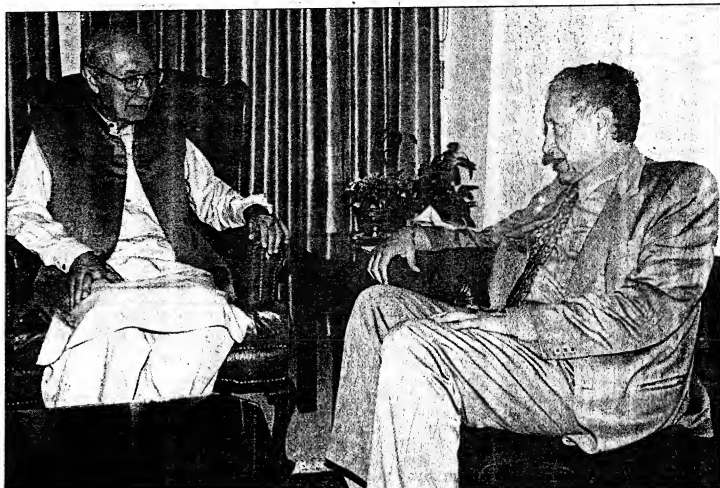
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TASHKENT: Taliban Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttapi (L) listens to Dr A. Paktis at a news conference here on Monday.—Reuters



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz meets Lakhdar Brahimi, United Nations secretary general's special envoy on Afghanistan, here on Saturday.—AFP

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# Taliban warned over hiring foreigners

ISLAMABAD, July 25: Guerrillas fighting Taliban on Sunday warned it would treat any foreign recruits who control 80 percent of it captured in Taliban ranks as criminals, and give them the "maximum punishment".

The warning was issued in a statement amid reports that the Taliban movement had been bolstered by the arrival of recruits — thousands of Pakistanis and hundreds of Arabs — for a fresh offensive against opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masood.

"Foreign military personnel and recruits captured by the armed forces will not be considered as prisoners of war, but as criminals involved in crimes of aggression, against humanity and against internal and external security of the state, who will face the maximum punishment," the statement said.

It was made public amid continuing speculation that the Taliban, who control 80 percent of Afghanistan, were poised for a major offensive to chase Masood from his strongholds.

The statement claimed that some 3,000 to 5,000 Pakistani militants belonging to religious parties and a brigade of some 400 Arabs had been deployed along several fronts north of Taliban-held Kabul.

Masood, military chief of the government driven from Kabul by the Taliban three years ago, says the opposition holds several hundred foreign prisoners captured during the conflict.

The Taliban deny any foreign recruits are involved in its fight against Masood but the United Nations has expressed concern over continuing reports about the

presence of foreign "volunteers" in the ranks of the Taliban.

The opposition said the Taliban had turned areas under its control into "terrorist" training grounds for foreign military groups including those loyal to Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

Travellers returning from Kabul said they saw thousands of volunteers who appeared to have been recruited from religious schools or madrassas in Pakistan, where the Taliban was born in the early 1990s.

They said there were also several hundred Arab recruits who appeared to have been drawn by the promise of a Taliban Jihad or holy war against Masood, whom the Taliban accuse of being a godless ex-communist.

Peace talks between the Taliban and opposition appeared to reach a

dead end in the Turkmen capital of Tashkent last week.

Tehran warns: Iran on Sunday warned against giving military assistance to Afghanistan's warring factions after fresh attacks melted all hopes for further peace talks.

Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi called for an end to "any military assistance to Afghan rival factions," in a bid to "prevent escalation of clashes and further fratricide in Afghanistan," the official IRNA news agency said.

Asefi underlined the need to solve the conflict through negotiation and stressed Iran's full support for peace efforts by the United Nations as well as the so-called "Six-plus-Two" group in Uzbekistan's capital of Tashkent.

In Kabul, UN special envoy

Lakhdar Brahimi said Friday that further peace talks were unlikely as fresh fighting broke out between the two factions.

Brahimi said the international community expected Afghanistan's neighbours to stop "pouring arms and war making material" into the country.

The Taliban government is only recognised by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran has had strained relations with the Taliban militia since the murder of several Iranian diplomats and a journalist during the Taliban's capture of the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif last year.

But a Taliban official said Saturday the militia were ready for fence-mending talks with Tehran.

Reuters/AFP

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## Uzbek president, Masood hold peace talks

TASHKENT (Internews) — A leading Afghan opposition commander, Ahmed Shah Masood, has held talks with Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov in Tashkent, the Uzbek TV reported Thursday.

"I know you well as an authoritative person, military leader and politician," Karimov was quoted as telling Masood, the opposition Northern Alliance leader, whom he met for the first time.

"Both leaders discussed the recently concluded meeting of the Six-plus-Two group meeting on Afghanistan and agreed that there was no military solu-

tion to the multifarious problems of the country," the Uzbek TV said.

"The Tashkent meeting was planned to be a start for talks on possible actions directed toward ending the protracted conflict in Afghanistan and its consequences," President Karimov told Masood. Uzbek Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Komilov and a representative of the Northern Alliance Dr Abdullah were present at the meeting.

Masood paid glowing tributes to the government of Uzbekistan for bringing all regional and world powers together in Tashkent to highlight the Afghan problem.

## Taliban, Pakistan main hurdle for failure of peace efforts: Masood

ISLAMABAD (PPI) — A spokesman of Afghan Commander Ahmed Shah Masood has blamed Taliban and what he claimed "their real supporter Pakistan are the main reason for failure of all peace efforts in Afghanistan."

"They have blocked the peace process. At present, too, the stand of Taliban and Pakistan are the main hurdle in way of peace in Afghanistan. We have always supported peace efforts launched by the UN or Afghan personalities and would continue to do so as we wish return of peace to Afghanistan," said Dr Abdullah currently in Washington for talks with US officials.

He told VoA Thursday that his visit to Washington is aimed at meeting US officials, Special Envoy of UN Secretary General Lakhdar Brahimi, Congressmen and Senators to discuss possibilities of return of peace to Afghanistan.

Answering a question Dr Abdullah said Taliban are making statements that they accept UN peace efforts but in practical they are obstructing way of peace. There have been number of agreements in Ashkabad but later Taliban backed out of their commitment.

## Masood in Uzbekistan

MOSCOW, July 21: A senior commander of opposition forces in Afghanistan, Ahmed Shah Massud, on Wednesday arrived for talks in Uzbekistan toward a ceasefire in the continuing conflict, Russian news agencies reported.

Masood's arrival coincided with reports that the Taliban and opposition forces resumed fighting in the northern province of Samangan.

Massud was expected to meet Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulasis Kamilov to discuss the ceasefire the opposition alliance proposed during two-day peace talks led by the United Nations in Tashkent this week, ITAR-TASS said.

The representatives of the Taliban called during the talks for the two sides to spare civilian objects in the conflict. Both sides pledged to continue their dialogue.—dpa

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## Gun duel between Taliban, opposition

DEH SABZ (Afghanistan), July 20: The Taliban and the Afghan opposition exchanged artillery fire across frontlines here on Tuesday despite calls at peace talks in Tashkent for a temporary cease-fire.

However, most trenches were empty after Taliban commanders took advantage of the lull in hostilities and a prisoner exchange to give their troops some time off.

"Most have gone back to Kabul to take care of business and to see their families," Taliban commander Omar Gul said as a Red Cross plane flew low overhead ferrying released Taliban troops to Kabul.

Gul said it was the third flight to have crossed the frontline on Tuesday morning. The line is usually filled by thousands of Taliban, who maintain positions along the surrounding mountaintops.

"In some places we are in

Kalashnikov range," he said, referring to the rifle's range of some 500 metres. "If they pop up we top them off" he said, referring to a normal day's fighting. "If we pop up they top us off."

"But most people are gone for the day."

The prisoner exchange and ceasefire were called for at the six-plus-two meeting in the Uzbekistan capital.

However, analysts say the latest round of talks offer only a remote chance of peace.

Brahimi appealed to both sides not to proceed with an expected major offensive in the meantime.

On the front line 25kms north of Kabul, Gul said negotiators were trying to achieve the impossible.

"We will have to wait and see but the offensive has been delayed because of the peace talks," he added.—AFP

## Afghan Opp says Taliban strikes repulsed

KABUL July 13 (AFP) - Afghanistan's opposition Northern Alliance said Tuesday it had shot down a Taliban helicopter and repulsed attacks by the hardline Islamic militia in the northern province of Samangan.

An opposition spokesman said four Taliban, including commanders, were killed when the helicopter was downed along frontlines near Dara-i-Suf.

He said the Russian-made helicopter was ferrying Taliban troops between Dara-i-Suf and Mazar-i-Sharif.

"The Taliban secured the dead bodies," he added.

"To the east of Samangan city, the Taliban attacked our positions but they were repulsed, 40 Taliban were killed and 13 taken as prisoners, along with a quantity of arms and ammunition," the alliance spokesman told AFP.

"Other fronts are quiet now."

The alliance is anticipating a major Taliban offensive across four frontlines which surround the Panjsher Valley to the north of Kabul, home to the main resistance fighters led by commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

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## Afghan opposition captures strategic district in Samangan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The Afghan opposition alliance troops have captured the district of Aq Qubrook in Samangan, enabling the Alliance to strike at Taliban strongholds in north Samangan and Balkh, an opposition commander said.

Although sporadic fighting continues on the outskirts of Darre Suf, Alliance troops have succeeded in mopping up the regions to the east of the valley with the anti-Taliban forces now within 15km of Aybak, the capital of Samangan province, General Hussain Anwari said.

Kunduz Elsewhere, Taliban troops launched a major offensive on the district of Dashte Archi in Kunduz province. After four hours of fighting, troops loyal to the Taliban were forced to hastily retreat. We have yet to receive confirmation of Taliban casualties from the region.

Kabul proper/Shamali Parallel to Taliban offensives in Samangan and Kunduz, troops loyal to the militia launched an attack on Alliance strongholds in the Shamali regions of Afghanistan three days ago. Both Sarrak e Nau and Sarrak e Kohna came under attack.

In an Alliance counter offensive, a major Taliban depot was blown up in Sarrak e Nau destroying large quantities of arms and ammunition. Material damage was significant assisted in part by fires, which raged for over three hours. Thirty Taliban guards were killed and many others injured in the explosion. At least 12 vehicles were destroyed in the operation.

Taliban jets continued pounding Alliance positions in Shamle, targeting the HQ of Ousted Sayaf late last night.

## Taliban gain

PESHAWAR, July 22: Fighters of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban wrested the district headquarters of Dara Soof in northern Samangan province amid intense fighting with opposition forces, reports said on Thursday.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) news agency reported that Taliban and its opposition troops were continuing to fight Thursday in Dara Hussaini, in Dara Soof. Three persons have been killed in the battle for Dara Hussaini, and both sides were using heavy weapons.—dpa

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23 JUL 1999

NATION 28 JUL 1999

Taliban, Shura-i-Nazar exchange artillery shells

## Situation intensified in north of Kabul

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR — The situation in north of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, on Tuesday further intensified when Taliban and Shura-i-Nazar of Ahmad Shah Masud exchanged artillery shells against each others' positions but they did not enter into a direct fighting for which they have finalised strategies.

The Summer offensives, as named by Taliban, has also drew the attention of western media which is behind Arab national Osama bin Laden who is also a part of Taliban's offensive.

In this connection, a number of well-reputed newspapers publishing contradictory reports involved Osama and his like-minded colleagues from Pakistan in the fresh offensives against the Northern Alliance positions in several northern provinces of Afghanistan. A Taliban spokesman, when contacted, informed *The Nation* that the situation

remained normal and peaceful on Tuesday but both the sides exchanged artillery shells with some intervals.

The Peshawar-based Afghan Islamic Press has also confirmed such reports and said that Taliban have finally decided to launch offensives against the Northern Alliance in Parwan, Kapisa and other provinces including Samangan which is adjacent to Kanduz province, bordering with Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan.

Through various sources, this correspondent confirmed that Taliban are working on the Summer offensives and first they want to clear the landmines cropped up by the forces loyal to warlord Ahmad Shah Masud. In this connection, Taliban purchased some 2,000 donkeys. The reports state that from Charikar to Shakardar, the Shura-i-Nazar troops prepared mines in the whole region to prevent Taliban forces from further advancement in the region.

The traders and businessmen arriv-

ing in Peshawar confirmed that preparations for the Summer offensives by Taliban not only caused unrest among the Alliance leaders but also caused wide-range fears among the civilians, who have started shifting to safer areas. Taliban claim that due to their underhand deal with several commanders of the opposition and elders of the civilians, they are confident of minimum casualties. So far, Taliban leadership has assembled more than 100,000 troops from all over the country on northern fronts.

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## Taliban claim success in offensive

KABUL, July 28: Thousands of Taliban fighters on Wednesday launched a three-pronged offensive to crush the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood, the last hurdle between the militia and control of the whole of Afghanistan.

The Taliban went into battle shortly before dawn, backed by ageing ex-Soviet MiG fighters and a huge artillery barrage.

The long-expected offensive followed a deadlock in United Nations-brokered peace talks one week ago in Tashkent and allegations by the UN envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, that neighbouring states were pouring in arms for their proxies.

The Taliban government accuses Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia of aiding the opposition alliance, which in turn accuses Pakistan of backing the Taliban.

Brahimi appealed to the Taliban last week not to go to war again, arguing no group has succeeded in taking control of all Afghanistan in two decades.

Taliban fighters and Kabul residents said the initial attacks were on the two main roads leading north from the capital, Kabul, and to the northeast towards Tagab,

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close to Masood's Bagram air base, a key Masood supply line.

Opposition sources conceded the loss of some ground in Tagab, which is 80 km from Kabul and leads to Bagram and Masood's native Panjsher valley, his bastion since the Taliban chased him from Kabul three years ago.

Masood's fighters, dug in some 25 km north of Kabul, fired more

than 20 rockets on the capital, most of which hit the civilian/military airport. No casualties were reported.

By the time of midday Muslim prayers, fighting on the fronts north of Kabul had subsided. Taliban fighters interviewed at the front reported no change in positions.

The independent Afghan Islamic Press said the Taliban had captured the Maktab and Warsak areas and were heading for Mahmoud-i-Raqi, capital of Kapisa province.

It was the Taliban's first major attack in 10 months and followed the arrival in Kabul of thousands of Pakistani and hundreds of Arab recruits intent on waging a Jihad (holy war) against Masood, military commander of the ousted government.—Reuters

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